



ELY CATHEDRAL

Christianity in Southern Fenland

by

the Reverend

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with a Foreword by

THE BISHOP OF ELY

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FOREWORD BY THE BISHOP OF ELY

THERE are signs nowadays of an increased interest in history, and especially in local history. Mr. McNeile deals with the development of religious life in the southern Fenland, and at the same time has shown how it fits into the background of Church life in England. He is to be congratulated on the way in which he has succeeded with a hard task.

We cannot expect that Church life in the twentieth century will be the same as in the ninth or sixteenth centuries, but as we trace the story we shall find that we have far more in common with our ancestors in these parts than perhaps we had thought. We shall learn how they tried to solve their problems (some of them strangely like ours to-day) and we shall learn perhaps from their mistakes. But, above all, we shall be encouraged by their faith and constancy. A distinguished historian said that Church history is a cordial for drooping spirits. I hope and believe that those who read this book will find that to be true.

EDWARD ELY

The Palace
Ely

Whitsuntide 1946

P R E F A C E

I TRACE the genesis of this little book to a remark made some half dozen years ago at the Diocesan Education Board to the effect that the syllabus in Church day and Sunday schools ought to include some instruction in local Church history, but that no book on the subject was available.

It occurred to me some time later that I might learn a great deal myself, and possibly help others, by trying to produce such a book. It has proved even more interesting than I expected, leading me into all sorts of by-paths, rambling about among volumes and records of the very existence of which I was previously quite ignorant.

This is far from being a text-book for schools, I hope, and still less does it contain a syllabus. Nevertheless, I hope that it may have a certain value in that direction. At the same time I hope it may appeal to a wider circle, that of the ordinary 'man-in-the-street' who has an interest in his Church and its history. I hasten to add that it is by no means intended for the expert. I fear that if any such does chance to pick it up, he will find many inaccuracies and blunders, for which I apologize in advance. They must be attributed to the Egyptian darkness from which I started.

One of my chief difficulties has been to strike the mean between an assumption of familiarity on the part of the reader with the main facts of general Church history and the necessity of providing a background for the local version. I am aware of inconsistencies in this, but plead that they have not been wholly unintentional.

Another difficulty has been in striking the balance between the story of the University and the countryside. They are, of course, intermingled and overlap. But the University is a national institution, and introduces men and topics whose importance reaches far beyond this locality. I am conscious that the balance is weighted sometimes unduly in its favour, and a partial reason for that is that during the war it has not been possible for me to wander round and search for evidence in villages at first-hand nearly as much as I should have liked to. Those incumbents whom I have approached have been most kind in giving me such information as they could in answer to my questions.

PREFACE

The title of the book is scarcely accurate. In the early chapters I have certainly dealt with the beginnings of Christianity in this part of the fens, but later the theme has become the County of Cambridgeshire with the Isle of Ely, which includes regions, especially in the south and south-west of the county, which are strictly not in the fens at all.

I anticipate criticism again by confessing that in dealing with Anglo-Saxon names in particular, and possibly later on as well, I have frankly adopted the simplest, more phonetic, spellings, preferring, for instance, 'Etheldreda' to 'Aethelthryth', and 'Wilnoth' to 'Wlnoth', in the belief that I shall merit thanks from a reader as unsophisticated as myself.

I have consulted a large number of authorities, ancient and modern, some of which are given at the end of the book. I have no doubt that I ought to have given references and made acknowledgments in footnotes more frequently than I have, but again I have in view my reader, who will, as a rule, be little concerned with them. I hope I have not committed the sin of plagiarizing from living authors without the necessary note.

I have found in particular the multitudinous papers and articles by the late Dr. W. M. Palmer invaluable, and have freely used them. His researches into village histories are quite remarkable.

My thanks are due to many people: to learned scholars who have been most kind in answering my letters, like Professor Hamilton Thompson, Dr. Helen Cam, and Mr. R. H. Hodgkin, lately Provost of Queen's College, Oxford; to the Cambridge University Librarian for repeated help and guidance; to village clergy, as I have already said; most especially to the Bishop of the Diocese for his great kindness in writing a Foreword; to my old friend from Oxford days, Sir Ernest Barker, for advice at the outset and for generous help in the matter of publication; and to my brother, the Rev. A. P. McNeile for preparing the indexes.

I am also indebted to the Rev. E. V. Tanner for the photograph of Balsham Church; to Mr. Peter Godfrey for the loan of the print of Swaffham: Two Churches; and to Messrs. Starr and Rignall of Ely and Messrs. Ramsey and Muspratt of Cambridge for the photographs of Ely Cathedral which form the subject of the frontispiece and the jacket.

R. F. McN.

Christianity in
Southern Fenland

CHAPTER I

TOPOGRAPHY AND POPULATION

THE region roughly corresponding to the County of Cambridge-shire (including the Isle of Ely) was in early times remote and secluded from the rest of the country, owing to natural barriers helped to some extent by artificial protection. Round the south there was an impenetrable fringe of dense forest stretching far into the Midlands and East Anglia, pierced at first by rough tracks forced by the ancient Britons to drive their herds into the parts beyond, and then by the roads which the Romans made out of these tracks.

To the north of this came 'the desolate Fen-country which stretched from the Hollow-land (Holland) of Lincolnshire to the channel of the Ouse, a wilderness of shallow waters and reedy islets, wrapt in its own mist-veil, and tenanted only by flocks of screaming wild-fowl'.¹

For part of the year this was more or less dried up, and was covered with sedge and undergrowth of various kinds, but in the winter months it was in a state of flood, broken only by the islands on the higher gravel land, such as the extensive Isle of Ely itself and a number of other smaller ones.

It was precisely the extreme isolation of some of these barely habitable islands that attracted recluses and devotees in the early Christian period. Etheldreda, when she retired to Ely, thought to find there the quiet and security that she craved for herself and her few followers. On Guthlac, of whom we shall hear again, the fens seemed to exercise a weird and horrid fascination. Living there 'in a wretched hovel, constructed apparently in the remains of a chambered tumulus, he carried on incessant struggles with demons, whose antics seem inextricably mingled in the saint's disordered mind with more mundane Celtic-speaking Britons, those bitter enemies of the Saxon people'.²

More cheerfully, one of King William's soldiers, who had found himself inside the fortress of Ely in the days of Hereward, and had been released, wrote a glowing description to the king telling of the wonderful fertility of the island, the abundance of wild animals,

¹ J. R. Green, *A Short History of the English People*, Chapter I.

² Collingwood and Myres, *Roman Britain*, Chapter XXII.

birds, herds and flocks, set about with great waters and marshes like a strong wall.

For many centuries, while villages and settlements increased, and man got the better of these wild forces of nature, fen and marsh still persisted, and as late as the seventeenth century Thomas Fuller, the great and witty historian, recalls the old proverbial name of the 'Cambridgeshire camels', derived from their tall stature due to their going about on stilts.

Of all the innumerable word-pictures of the fens that have been written in ancient and modern times, perhaps the most haunting is that by Charles Kingsley in the introduction to *Hereward the Wake*. It may be the work of an artist and not a photographer, just as the whole book, like all the ablest historical novels, is an interpretation and not a mere chronicle; but the more for that it leaves us with an impression that may be truer than the truth. It is worth while quoting it at some length.

'The low uplands were clothed in primeval forest; oak and ash, beech and elm, with here and there perhaps a group of ancient pines, ragged and decayed, and fast dying out in England even then. Between the forests were open wolds, dotted with white sheep and golden gorse; rolling plains of rich though ragged turf, whether cleared by the hand of man or by the wild fires which often swept over the hills. And between the wood and the wold stood many a Danish town, with its clusters of low straggling buildings round the holder's house, of stone or of mud below, and of wood above; its high dykes round tiny fields; its flocks of sheep ranging on the wold; its herds of swine in the forests; and below — a more precious possession still — its herds of mares and colts, which fed with the cattle and the geese in the rich grass-fen.

'For always, from the foot of the wolds, the green flat stretched away, illimitable, to an horizon where, from the roundness of the earth, the distant trees and islands were hulled down like ships at sea. The horse-fen lay, bright green, along the foot of the wold; beyond it the browner peat, or deep fen; and among that dark velvet alder beds, long lines of reed-rond, emerald in spring, and golden under the autumn sun; shining "eas" or river-reaches; broad meres dotted with a million fowl, while the cattle waded along their edges after the rich sedge-grass, or wallowed in the mire through the hot summer's day. Here and there, too, upon the far horizon, rose a tall line of ashen trees, marking some island of

firm rich soil. In some of them, as at Ramsey and Crowland, the huge ashes had disappeared before the axes of the monks; and a minster rose above the fens, amid orchards, gardens, cornfields, pastures, with here and there a tree left standing for shade.'

Kingsley then refers to the effect of such surroundings on the people who live in them, and speaks of 'the too universal law that mankind worships the powers which do them harm, rather than the powers which do them good. Their priestly teachers, too, had darkened still further their notion of the world around, as accursed by sin, and swarming with evil spirits. The gods and fairies of their ancient mythology had been transformed into fiends, alluring or loathsome, but all alike destructive to man, against whom the soldier of God, the celibate monk, fought day and night with relics, Agnus Dei, and sign of Holy Cross.

'And therefore the Danelagh men, who feared not mortal sword or axe, feared witches, ghosts, Pucks, Wills-o'-the-Wisp, Werewolves, spirits of the wells and of the trees, and all dark, capricious, and harmful beings whom their fancy conjured up out of the wild, wet, and unwholesome marshes, or the dark wolf-haunted woods. For that fair land, like all things on earth, had its darker aspect. The foul exhalations of autumn called up ague, crippling and enervating, and tempting, almost compelling, to that wild and desperate drinking which was the Scandinavian's special sin.'

More prosaically Domesday Book, with its business-like catalogue of taxable property and the dues to be paid by each landowner to the king, portrays by implication the wide expanse of water and mere, telling us for instance that Isleham was called upon to pay as part of its tribute 1,250 eels a year, and Soham 3,500, besides presents of fish from seven fishermen three times a year, according to their catch. And passing reference is made to a 'ship' that plied at Soham, no mere fishing boat, but something comparable to sea-going vessels. For long after this time, also, the ordinary 'sewers' through the fens were used as canals, and formed the highways from place to place.

From the earliest times attempts, with varying degrees of success, were made to drain this land, or, at the least, to restrict it. The Romans planned to increase the area of fertility by throwing up huge embankments. By forced British labour they constructed the great drain from the Nene to the Witham known as Carr Dyke.

They built causeways across the fens, which, however, on the whole defeated their own ends, for while they shut the salt water out they also dammed up the fresh, so that in winter the fenlands were not only flooded by their own rainfall, but by the water that came down from inland. And what they were able to do was almost entirely nullified by the all-destroying Anglo-Saxons, who swept away everything they met.

Later on the monks did valuable service to the best of their ability. There was an idea that they had an eye to the fattest land in choosing the sites for their monasteries. This is flatly contradicted by the stories we shall hear of Etheldreda at Ely, Guthlac at Crowland, the founders of Thorney and of other settlements. The thirteenth-century historian, Matthew Paris, tells us that in 1256 William, Bishop of Ely, and Hugh, Abbot of Ramsey, 'agreed on the bounds of their fens, whereof in these our times a wonder happened, for whereas anciently they were neither accessible for man or beast, affording only deep mud, with sedge and reeds, and possessed by birds (yea, much more by devils, as appeareth in the life of St. Guthlac, who, finding it a place of horror and great solitude, began to inhabit there), is now changed into delightful meadows and arable ground'.

In fact, it was owing to the hard work and no small skill of the monks that fertile islands like Ramsey and Thorney rose amid the meres, with rich fields and woods, producing plenty of timber, besides orchards and vineyards. Fuel also was found from the soil to supply all their needs. For food they had the red stag, roe deer, goats and hares, waterfowl, and all kinds of fish. In short, the island home of the monk in spring became like some bower of Eden.

Attempts, which did not prove very successful, were made from time to time in the Middle Ages to effect a more systematic drainage, particularly in the fifteenth century. We ourselves are not unfamiliar with the inborn conservatism of the community in finding objections to every proposed reform. And Thomas Fuller in this connection supplies us with a characteristic summary of arguments used for and against any such attempt. The opposition pleaded that the fens afforded great plenty and variety of fish and fowl, 'which here have their seminaries and nurseries, which will be destroyed on the draining thereof, so that none will be had, but at excessive prices'. There was, moreover, plenty of sedge, turf and

reed, of great value to the common people, while thousands of the poor were maintained by fishing and fowling. And such arguments were always supported by the plea of impracticability.

The same Fuller is high in praise of the lusty fen-men. He says that 'the common people have robust bodies, able to carry 8 Bushels of Barley on their backs, whereas 4 are found sufficient load for men of other counties'.

As to their valour, 'When the rest of the East Angles cowardly fled away from the Danish army, the men of the County of Cambridge did manfully resist; whence it was that whilst the English did rule, the praise of the people of Cambridge did most eminently flourish. At the coming of the Normans, they made so stout a resistance that the Conqueror, who did *fly* into England, was glad to *creep* into Ely.'

Some few years after the drainage controversy John Morton, Bishop of Ely from 1478 till he became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1486, did succeed in having the great drain, still known to us as 'Morton's Leam', dug from Peterborough to Guyhirne and on to Wisbech, then on the sea coast. But the overthrow of the monasteries at the Reformation was disastrous for the upkeep of what drainage there was, and the district relapsed into an untended swamp. So, in or about the year 1600, an act was passed for 'the recovering of many hundred thousand Acres of Marshes'. This did not immediately bring about the desired result, as obstructionist tactics and foolish jealousies prevailed, till at last in the middle of the seventeenth century the famous Bedford cuts were completed, running from Earith towards the sea. This marked the beginning of the effective drainage of the fen area from which we benefit to-day. The Earl of Bedford and his Co-Adventurers, as they were called, at last succeeded in carrying out their bold scheme for turning 'this expanse of great waters and a few reeds into a pleasant pasture of cattle and kyne'.

The character of the countryside naturally had a profound influence on its history from the earliest times. It is now known, thanks largely to the remarkable development of the most modern art of air-photography, that the earliest Saxon invaders did not find such a forbidding and desolate waste of waterlogged country as used to be supposed,¹ but that, on the contrary, in the Roman period large areas were populous and highly cultivated. But it

¹ Collingwood and Myres, *op. cit.*, Chapter XXII.

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remains true that, very soon after the departure of the Romans, Fenland had become desolate. How far the change was brought about by human agencies and how far by natural causes cannot be determined. The newcomers did work havoc with the dykes and other labours of their predecessors, but also there is reason to believe that the time was ripe for a general evacuation even apart from their vandalism. A certain subsidence of the ground seems to have happened, lowering the ground level, and consequently rendering the district largely uninhabitable. It is probable that these two causes combined to produce the known result.

The natural way of approach to the district was from the Wash and up the river valleys, the Ouse, the Cam and the Lark, and it was thus, we may imagine, that the Romans came, and thus the Anglo-Saxons. And it was along these rivers that the earliest settlements were found, rather than along the little network of roads constructed by the Romans. These, naturally, played an important part in providing communications then and afterwards, but it is very noticeable that they never formed the base for villages as our modern roads do.

Most important was the Ermine Street, now known as the Old North Road (to be distinguished from the 'Great North Road'), skirting the region to the west, and passing northwards through Huntingdon. There was also the Via Devana, coming from the south-east, and following the line of the present road that runs, under so many different names, through the centre of Cambridge and so to Huntingdon. And there was Akeman Street, branching off from the Via Devana at Cambridge, and running to Ely and perhaps on to Littleport. It would be a mistake to think of these as broad, smooth, solid roads, such as we now enjoy. They cannot have been much more than rudimentary developments of the still earlier British tracks, but they served the needs of civilians and legionaries alike.

Yet the first settlers followed the river valleys and not the roads, till they passed out of the swamps to the higher gravel terraces, from which the Romans spread, as we have seen, almost all over the fen district proper. Conquerors though they were at first, they soon became peaceful settlers, bringing their wives and families, their arts and their commerce, as is shown by the abundant traces in our county, as throughout England, of towns and villages, houses and market-places.

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But then the disaster came. By the year 400 the Empire was tottering to its fall, and it was no longer able to maintain its occupying armies in this distant island. The legions were withdrawn, and that was the signal for a speedy inrush of barbarian hordes.

The tribes from northern Europe proved themselves more ferocious and less civilized than ever the Romans had been. Wherever they went they left a train of desolation, buildings of all sorts were levelled to the ground, and the inhabitants massacred or driven out.

From Fenland the Romano-British stock fled westward, those few who remained sheltering themselves in the recesses of forest or marsh, and being reduced to practical servitude. The invaders meantime once more planted themselves along the river valleys, and for long left the fen almost uninhabited. Whether or no this was because nature had made it uninhabitable, the fact remains. As a result the narrow strip between the forest and the fen became more than ever the highway of traffic between East Anglia and the Midlands, and the site of many villages.

A century later the population was practically of Anglo-Saxon stock, and its tribes were beginning to work out their own settled governments. It is difficult in this connection to place exactly our region. When the new kingdoms became established, there was to the east that of East Anglia, and to the west, in the Midlands, the great kingdom of Mercia. There was also a group of people known as the Middle Angles, whose area covered roughly a sweep from our Leicestershire, down through Huntingdonshire, and round the south-west corner of the fens in the direction of Cambridge. They were ill defined, and such kings as they had appear to have been but underlings of the greater king of Mercia.

Wars and rumours of wars between Mercia and East Anglia were unceasing, and this gravel fringe of ours provided the passage for one to attack the other. It may be that, so far as there was any boundary, it was formed by the river Cam, and it has been suggested that the dual origin of the town of Cambridge on the two banks of the river, the signs of which were very long continued, is an indication of a remote time when East Angle and Mercian glared at one another across the ford where Magdalene Bridge now stands.

In this connection Professor Stenton says: 'The Fenland which stretches for many miles to the south and east of Crowland played an important part in early English history, for it prevented Mercia

from making East Anglia a Mercian province. From time to time East Anglian kings were compelled to acknowledge Mercian supremacy, but invasion was made difficult by impassable country.¹

All this is very pertinent to our story, as will appear in the next chapter, for the outstanding figure of the seventh century was Penda, King of Mercia from about 630 to 655, whose arms and influence were felt far and wide, and were, in the eyes of the early Church, all for evil.

The fens come in for very scant attention by the historians from whom our information is drawn. They were given over to a tribe called the Gyrwas, or, more simply, the Girvii. But whether these were independent in any true sense, or whether they accepted the suzerainty of either or both of the neighbouring kingdoms, it is impossible to say. The truth probably is that they were overlooked as unimportant, occupying a district that was very sparsely inhabited, and useless for warlike purposes save only for the corridor in the south. They were completely overshadowed by their contemptuous neighbours.

History books have much to say about the rivalries that ensued between the contending Saxon kings, and how first one, and then another, gained the ascendancy, until they were drawn together by the common danger of the Norse and Danish invaders. These harried the country up and down for many years, but it was not till 870 that East Anglia was seriously attacked, and with it our Fenland. Cambridge and the surrounding region then felt the full blast, towns were destroyed, and churches levelled to the ground.

But King Alfred was now in the plenitude of his power, and forced the enemy to come to terms on what proved to be an honourable and lasting basis. Guthrum, their king (after whom Godmanchester is said to be named, as being 'Guthrum's Caster'), agreed to accept Christianity, which he did wholeheartedly, and in return was granted half the country. The boundary of the Dane-lagh ran roughly from the northern side of the Thames estuary to Chester, so that the Cambridge region fell well within it.

Thenceforward the Danes showed themselves, for all their martial vigour, by no means so barbarous as the Anglo-Saxons had been. They brought over their wives, reared families, joined in commerce, and, in fact, settled down as peaceable inhabitants, as the Romans had done before them, but more speedily. Under the

¹ *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 49.

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Danelagh the country enjoyed on the whole a period of steady advance, though it was broken temporarily by another incursion of Danes from a new quarter in the latter part of the tenth century.

Four hundred and fifty years passed from the departure of the Romans and the barbarian invasion to the Danish settlement, a long time, as we realize when we look back for the same length from our own day, and find the Wars of the Roses not yet concluded. During these centuries Fenland recovered from the desolation in which it began, and villages sprang up on the old Roman sites and elsewhere, till it was reasonably well populated throughout. Wherever there was a sufficiently dry spot, there appeared a group of houses, as the ground was remarkably fertile.

Yet never to this day has the northern part of the county been more than sparsely inhabited. If to-day a line is drawn east and west through Ely, it cuts off to the north about one-third of the area of the county. But of the one hundred and eighty or so parishes in the county, reckoning the towns as one each, only some twenty lie to the north of the line.

It is interesting to note that the villages existing to-day are almost without exception identical with those mentioned in Domesday Book. A few have disappeared. Wratworth has vanished, being absorbed by Orwell. Whitwell remains only a farm name near Coton. Halle and Lindon are merged in Haddenham, though Lindon was once the principal of the three, the names surviving in 'Lindon End' and 'Hill Row' which now describe parts of Haddenham. Coton stands alone as a medieval village that came into existence after Domesday. A few small villages have arisen, chiefly in the northern part under modern conditions.

Turning to the question of population, little more need be said about the early centuries. Any estimate of numbers in the Roman times would be purely conjectural, and it must suffice that, judged by the standard of those days, the community was flourishing, but that after then it was reduced to the barest minimum. Then came the stage of steady growth under comparatively ordered government through the centuries preceding the Norman Conquest.

From that time, and on through the Middle Ages, we have, fortunately, some valuable evidence. There was never any census, as we understand the word, but official returns were called for from time to time for the purposes of taxation, and those from this

county have been thoroughly examined and presented by the late Dr. Palmer and Mr. Saunders in their fascinating *Notes on Cambridgeshire Villages*. They select five dates, the first of which is that of the famous Domesday Book. This was compiled from a complete survey in every county of all holdings, great and small, those of the king himself, of churchmen and religious houses, of lay tenants-in-chief, and of thanes and any others who held land. It is fortunate that a full copy of these returns exists for several of the Cambridgeshire Hundreds, so that information is more forthcoming for this part of the country than any other. With these records available, it remains to make a guess at the probable number of individuals accounted for in the family or estate of each land-owner. It is, perhaps, a rough and ready method, but gives a fair result.

The other dates are the 'Subsidy Tax' of 1327 at the beginning of Edward III's reign; the 'Poll Tax' of 1377 at the end of his reign; the 'Bishop's Return' of 1563; and finally the 'Hearth Tax' after the Restoration, in 1664. Of these the Poll Tax comes nearest to being a census, as it needs only the addition of children under fourteen.

It will be noted that the five dates are widely separated, with the exception of the second and third, whose proximity is a fortunate accident, as between them happened the Great Plague, or Black Death, in 1349, which swept away vast numbers all over the country. The ravages caused by it are given in general terms, with no reliable statistics such as moderns would love to compile, but we are able by our estimates to form some idea of the extent of the damage.

We take, then, the results presented to us with the reckonings of Dr. Palmer and Mr. Saunders of some hundred villages of which they have the requisite details, except for the fact that the returns for some few are missing for one or other of the occasions. And it is interesting to compare the numbers with those of the modern census, which was first taken in 1801, and every ten years since with the exception of 1941.

We find that roughly speaking the population increased by some 33 per cent between 1085 and 1327. The next half century shows a decrease of 20 per cent, which is surprisingly small in view of the appalling mortality of the Plague. It may be that the estimate for 1327 should be increased, or that popular descriptions

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of the Plague were exaggerated. But in any case there seems to have been a remarkably rapid recovery. In several instances, indeed, a village actually increased during the period. Why? Did some escape the Plague? Did Oakington, which sank from 480 to 230, fly for safety to Willingham, which grew by 50 per cent? Did some from Little Abington migrate in panic to its namesake Abington Pigots? Boxworth suffered badly, as did some of its neighbours, while Burwell, Haslingfield and others came very well out of it. We cannot suggest an answer, but content ourselves with the aggregate.

During the next two centuries, up to Tudor times, the population was almost stationary, but the hundred years after that show a large increase. If we represent the total for these hundred villages in 1087 by 100, that at the Restoration would be roughly 150, and at the last census in 1931 about 230. But the growth is very unevenly distributed, for a number of villages like Soham, Fulbourn, Burwell, Cottenham, Histon, have blossomed out almost into small towns, and if we exclude them, the figures show that through the Middle Ages the population of the countryside was by no means insignificant. It may be mentioned in passing that the peak time for the purely rural areas was in the census of 1871, after which there was a marked decline.

It should be noted that these statistics exclude altogether actual towns, Cambridge, Ely, March, Wisbech, and refer only to smaller places for which the figures happen to be available.

No mention of the Church has yet been made, as it has been the object of this chapter to provide the background against which the birth and early development of the Church stand out. It is now possible to proceed with the main subject of the book.

CHAPTER II

FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH

How Christianity first arrived in England is not known, though it is scarcely a mystery. Before the first century was out Britain was overrun by the Roman legions, and the occupation of the country lasted more than three hundred years. During that time the invaders turned into settlers, mixing with the natives, intermarrying, building houses and dwelling in them.

Relics of Roman towns and villages, with civilian houses as well as military camps, are found scattered up and down the country, and not least in our own county. They are most abundant in the southern part along and above the river valleys, but not only there. For in the Isle of Ely and even in the surrounding fen, and, in fact, wherever gravel banks rose high enough to provide a sufficiently dry site, the Romans have left their mark.

From Rome and Gaul alike there would be many who were Christians, coming over among the rest, once the country was moderately settled, to seek their fortunes in the new land. These would form a sort of aristocracy of civilization in all its forms, and their ways of life became an envied pattern to the more primitive Britons. We know that intercourse with the north of Gaul, where the faith was well established, was frequent and sustained, so that it was a natural result that Britons should begin to adopt their religion as much as their other customs.

Certain it is that by the end of the third century the Church had rooted itself in this country, and the impetus given to the faith throughout the Empire when Constantine embraced it must have been felt even in this distant isle.

It is probable, therefore, that it was in this way, rather than by any definite propagandist preaching, that Christianity found its way and spread far and wide. And we may assume that the region in which we are particularly interested was equally affected with the rest of the country, despite its natural remoteness. We could wish that there were some fragment of a Roman church left to tell its tale in the neighbourhood, but unfortunately there is none.

In addition to this Romano-British Church there was also the vigorous Celtic Church in Ireland and the south of Scotland,

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which had come into being quite independently, and which, when opportunity arose, showed itself far more zealous in the work of evangelization. We shall see that it was from it that missionaries actually did come afterwards to the Fenland.

When, at the beginning of the fifth century, the Roman domination was succeeded by the inrush of barbarians, and the native dwellers, as we have seen, were swept away to the far west, Christianity went with them, churches as well as villages were wiped out, and the country was once more in primitive heathenism. Any who did cling on to their refuges in the outskirts of Fenland in a semi-servile condition would soon relapse under the strong pressure of their surroundings.

Consequently when Augustine came with his mission from Pope Gregory in 597, he came to a heathen country, and had to begin afresh the work of conversion. He did indeed establish contact with the Christians in the west, but it resulted chiefly in controversies, with which, happily, we need not concern ourselves here.

The new Church was first established round Canterbury and the south-east; then Northumbria (by which is meant not our modern county of Northumberland, but, as the name implies, the region north of the Humber) was evangelized by the apostle Paulinus; then East Anglia. But for half a century Cambridgeshire appears to have been almost untouched. Unfortunately the evidence available is very scanty, and we are reduced to filling up by the help of a little imagination the outline provided by a few outstanding facts.

The first of these is probably scarcely a fact at all. We hear of a man twenty years or so even before Augustine, who ought, if he was worth anything, to have started the good work. He comes into the story in this way. Some centuries later, as we shall see, a monastery was founded at Ramsey. It sprang up under high patronage, and was heavily endowed by grants of land, and, in consequence, the monks spared no effort to advertise themselves, and acquire fame in the surrounding districts.

A story was circulated that a vision appeared to a rustic of Bluntisham, in which a man spoke to him, and said: 'I am Bishop Ivo. Five hundred years have now rolled away since I found my rest in the place called Slepe.' It was then the year 1080 or thereabouts, from which they concluded that St. Ivo had been translated to God in 580, and had, no doubt, since then been awaiting

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recognition. They searched for, and duly found, his remains, which were forthwith removed to Ramsey, where the saint proceeded to work innumerable miracles, which redounded to the honour of the monastery.

St. Ivo, in honour of whom the township of Slepe in course of time changed its name to St. Ives, is said to have been a bishop from far-away Persia, who somehow found his way to this country and to this district. If he did so, we may hope that he was not inactive in attempting to spread his religion, but, alas, no traces of his work are to be found.

We are on surer ground when we learn that 'through the blessed St. Augustine a monastery and a church had been erected in Ely in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, apostle of the Angles, in which he set up ministers to fulfil the office of God, whom the army of king Penda, laying waste to the country, afterwards drove out changing the place to a desert'.

This statement, made by the ancient 'Saxon Chronicle', is full of interest, and raises questions to which we would much like to have an answer. For the story, secular and religious, of this part of the country during the first half of the seventh century, is a complete blank. Nowhere else is there any hint of Augustine's emissaries penetrating to Fenland, or of any appearance of Christianity there. We can only suppose that some earnest adventurers from East Anglia, which did accept Christianity early on, found their way through the marshes to this obscure spot, and for the time being succeeded in establishing an infant Church, which did not long survive its birth. But the manner of its death is, at any rate, easily intelligible.

The Penda who destroyed the church was for thirty years before the middle of the century the most powerful man of his day, reigning over the wide kingdom of Mercia which he extended from the Welsh Marches to the borders of East Anglia. He was a warrior of the old stamp, fierce, strong and unscrupulous. He made frequent incursions into East Anglia, in the course of one of which he must have gone out of his way far enough to reach the marsh-bound Isle of Ely, but what took him there we do not know. He was also, and most of all, a lifelong enemy of Oswald, King of Northumbria, who was also a born soldier, but a devout Christian. For long Penda had the better of the struggle against his northern neighbours, and in 642 slew Oswald in battle. who was then suc-

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ceeded by his brother Oswy. Hostilities died down for a time, but broke out afresh, till Penda himself was killed in 655, and his son Peada came to the throne.

Peada, during his father's lifetime, had been under-king of the Middle Angles, and therefore probably, but by no means certainly, of our Fenland. Two years before Penda's death, Peada asked for the hand of Oswy's daughter in marriage, but could not obtain his desire unless he would embrace the faith of Christ, and be baptized together with the people whom he governed. He thereupon listened to the preaching of truth, and declared that he would willingly become a Christian even though he should be refused his bride. Accordingly he was baptized with all his earls and soldiers and their servants. More than that, four priests were brought down from the north to teach and baptize his nation. These, says Bede, 'were gladly heard, and many daily, as well noble as of the base sort, renouncing the filth of idolatry were cleansed in the font of faith'.

It will be noted that this mission took place while Penda was still at the height of his power, and that he raised no opposition, which suggests that his earlier antagonism to the faith was dictated, not by religious motives, but by political considerations. Gallio-like, he cared for none of these things, so long as he could force his way in battle and achieve his ends. Bede, in fact, adds the comment: 'Nor did the king Penda obstruct the preaching of the word among his people, the Mercians, if any were willing to hear it; but on the contrary he hated and despised those whom he perceived not to perform the works of faith, saying, "They were contemptible and wretched who did not obey their God in whom they believed"'.

It is permissible to assume that this affected part, at any rate, of our region, even if the missionaries did not penetrate to the more remote parts of the fens or to the easterly district beyond the Cam. But this must remain conjecture. If it is correct, we have here the definite beginning of the Christian Church in our villages.

It must be said, however, that the abruptness of the statement that the whole of Mercia with the adjacent provinces was converted by the grace of God to the Christian faith raises certain suspicions. We would like it to mean that the masses were tiring of the old paganism, and were ready, as soon as the restraining hand was removed, to embrace a more exalted religion. We would

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like to be able to compare the days of the Wesleys, when great crowds awaited them night after night, hanging on their words, and clamouring for admission to the true Church. To some extent this may have been the case in the north, where the towering personality and deep spirituality of Paulinus did sway the multitudes. But elsewhere the bald truth is less romantic. In Kent and in East Anglia wholesale adoption of Christianity, and soon afterwards wholesale repudiation, followed at once similar moves on the part of the king. The marriage of Peada with a Christian lady was not the only instance of such an event resulting in national conversion. And when we read of no fewer than 10,000 persons being baptized in the river under the direction of Augustine himself, we cannot put this on a level with more modern 'mass movements' which are not unknown in missionary fields to-day. The truth is that there was an approximation in these early days to what would now be called an 'Established Church'. If the king was a heathen, so were his subjects; if he became a Christian, they followed suit. The scrutiny was, to say the least, less exacting than that demanded by our Church to-day in non-Christian lands. Yet rough and ready as this method appears, it had the advantage that all would regard it as their duty to gather round the newly formed Church, and receive instruction after, if not before, baptism.

Our information is much more definite when we turn to the foundation of religious houses in the district. In 647, eight years before the death of Penda, and therefore six before the conversion of Peada, St. Felix, the apostle of East Anglia, whose name is still perpetuated in Suffolk, retired to Soham, where he founded a monastery, which flourished till it shared the fate of others in being destroyed by the Danes a couple of centuries later, after which it was never rebuilt. Here he died and was buried. He was a missionary to the backbone, and, while he sought out a quiet resting-place in which to end his days, we can scarcely doubt that he would instinctively use it for a definite extension of his labours. But he was still in the kingdom of East Anglia, or at the least in close touch with it, the king of which was a devout Christian.

Whatever may have been the true facts about the conversion of the Mercians during Penda's lifetime, as discussed above, his death certainly changed the whole situation, and the door was now wide open. Immediately afterwards Oswy and Peada together agreed to rear a monastery to the glory of Christ and the honour of St.

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Peter. This they proceeded to do, naming it 'Medeshamstede', a name which subsequently gave place to 'Peterborough', in commemoration of the saint to whom it was dedicated.

Peada died before the work was completed, and was succeeded by his brother Wulfhere, who heaped endowments on the monastery. Not till 664 was it finished, when a solemn service of dedication was held, at which the king stood up before all his thanes, and said with a loud voice: 'Thanked be the Almighty God for the worthy deed which is here done, and I will this day do honour to Christ and St. Peter; and I desire that ye all assent to my words. I, Wulfhere, do this day give to St. Peter and Abbot Sexwulf and the monks of this monastery these lands and these waters, and meres, and all the lands which lie thereabout, which are of my kingdom, freely, so that none but the abbot and the monks shall have any claim upon them.' There follows a list of the lands included in the grant. These were subsequently confirmed by the Pope, who emphasized that the abbey was to be free from all episcopal or other external control.

One of the first results of the foundation of Medeshamstede was the appearance of another monastery at Thorney. This was also the work of King Wulfhere, in answer to the petition of Abbot Sexwulf, who deemed it right that there should be a centre not only for monks, but for anchorites as well. These differ from ordinary monks in that they secluded themselves more strictly from the outer world, devoting their lives entirely to prayer and meditation, cutting themselves off even from such intercourse and occupations as came the way of their brethren in the monastery. For this purpose a spot was chosen as remote as possible, in the midst of almost inaccessible fenland. Later, however, its character became assimilated to the more usual type.

These two foundations were quickly followed by another of still greater importance. The King of East Anglia, Anna by name, like his predecessors a vigorous Christian, had a daughter named Etheldreda. In due time he gave her in marriage to one Tonbert, a chieftain in his country, of whom nothing is known except that he owned property around the later city of Ely, which he bestowed as dowry on his wife. Not long after the marriage he died, whereupon Etheldreda was sought and won by no less a man than Egfrid, King of Northumbria. For twelve years she lived with him, but, despite all his entreaties, preserved her virginity throughout, because she

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was bent on leaving the world and all its cares so as to devote herself to religion.

At long last he gave a grudging consent, and she took the veil in a northern convent. There she remained for a year, after which she determined to withdraw to the property which still was hers at Ely. Here she looked for a seclusion as complete as that of the anchorites at Thorney, in which she could erect her own convent. Her decision was sealed by God through wonders which happened to her on her journey south. First, her staff, thrust into the ground while she slept, blossomed, and bore leaves and fruit. Then, when her husband repented of letting her go and pursued her, the tide at St. Abb's Head miraculously rose and protected her.

Thus assured, she continued her journey, and on the way was consecrated abbess by Wilfrid, Archbishop of York. Her first work was to rebuild the church that had been destroyed by Penda, and then round it to set up her monastery. Here she reigned as first abbess over a mixed community of monks and nuns from 673 for a brief period of seven years before her death.

Her fame spread far and wide for her deep devotion coupled with extreme asceticism, and for her power of prophecy. It is perhaps worth while to quote at some length the delightful account of her given by Bede, who was born only a few years after her death. It is reported of her that from the time of her entering into the monastery she never wore any linen, but only woollen garments, and would rarely wash in a hot bath, unless just before any of the great festivals, as Easter, Whitsuntide and the Epiphany; and then she did it last of all, after having, with the assistance of those about her, first washed the other servants of God present. Besides, 'she seldom did eat above once a day, excepting on the great solemnities, unless some considerable distemper obliged her. From the time of matins she continued in the church at prayer till it was day; some also say that by the spirit of prophecy she, in the presence of all, not only foretold the pestilence of which she was to die, but also the number of those that should then be snatched away out of her monastery. She was taken to our Lord in the midst of her flock, seven years after she had been made abbess; and, as she had ordered, was buried among them, in such a manner as she had died, in a wooden coffin'.

During her reign at Ely she had a devoted servant of the name of Ovinus, who acted as a kind of Prime Minister. He is of little

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interest except for an inscription on a stone found at Haddenham, which formed the base of a cross. The inscription is:

LUCEM TUAM OVINO
DA DEUS ET REQUIEM
AMEN¹

She was succeeded as abbess by her sister Sexberga, who some sixteen years later thought fit to take up her bones and translate them into the church. Accordingly she dispatched some of the brethren to seek for a stone from which a suitable coffin could be made. 'And they taking ship (for this same country of Ely is roundabout with waters and fens, nor hath stones of larger size), came to a certain little city left uninhabited, the which was not far from thence, and in the English tongue is called Grantacaestir;² and by and by they found by the walls of the town a coffin of white marble, very fairly made, and covered with a lid of like stone.'

This they carried back to Ely, where it was found to fit exactly the body of Etheldreda. Moreover, when the grave was opened, the body was found to be as fresh and free from corruption as the day she had died. She was accordingly placed in it, and carried with all reverence into the church, and there buried. Thereafter, by the touching of her clothes, evil spirits were driven out of those that were possessed, and other diseases healed.

The story of her life, as it was told at Ely in the fourteenth century, is carved on the corbels of the eight great piers of the octagon in Ely Cathedral.

Little more is heard of the monastery till its destruction by the Danes two hundred years later. It was rebuilt after the lapse of a very few years, and lasted for another two centuries, when it was replaced by the beginnings of the present cathedral.

Thus four important monasteries were founded in the second half of the seventh century: Soham, Medeshamstede, Thorney and Ely. A fifth was added in the year 716 by Ethelbald, King of Mercia, in memory of Guthlac, one of the most romantic of the saints of those days.

Guthlac was the son of a Mercian noble, and spent his youth in wildness and dissipation. In the midst of that the voice of God

¹ Grant, O God, Thy Light and Rest to Ovinus. Amen.

² i.e. Cambridge, not Grantchester.

called to him, as it did many years later to Francis of Assisi, and arrested him suddenly in his folly. He entered the monastery of Repton, but after only two years there he sought and obtained permission to become a hermit. He set out on a journey of discovery, till he came to an uninhabited island in the fen country, surrounded by fever-stricken marshes, and there he settled with two companions from Repton. Here he contended with devils which appeared to him in bodily form, and lived a life of such sanctity that great and small, bishops and nobles, and peasants also, came to visit him in great numbers. He spoke with them, and gave his blessing, but still lived apart, refusing even to see his sister, who lived a like life in a cell not many miles away.

In 714 he died, and the king decided that the memory of such a man must be perpetuated by the erection of a permanent abbey. He endowed it with the isle on which it was to stand, the same as that where Guthlac had lived and died, free from all secular services, with leave to build and enclose a town. This is the origin of Crowland.

The abbey was burned in 870 by the Danes, and again in 1091, but it rose again, and continued to flourish, its property by the time of Domesday Book covering enormous tracts of land. Its privileges were confirmed repeatedly by royal charters almost up to the time of the Reformation. Twenty years after its second fire was replaced by a magnificent Norman building, part of which survives in the parish church to-day.

But this is anticipating our story a little, as the coming of the Danes will be dealt with more fully in the next chapter.

We see, then, that by the year 700 the Christianization of our Fenland was practically complete, having been brought about by the twofold agencies of missionaries definitely imported from without, and the growth of monastic centres. To these must be added a third, which must have partly preceded these two, and partly synchronized with them. For, as Professor Stenton says, the relationship between lord and man required that an underling should visit his overlord's court, and the visits of underlings to overlords like Edwin and Oswald must have carried some elementary knowledge of the new religion into regions which no missionary had yet explored. Whether the overlord in Fenland then was Anna of East Anglia, or Peada of Mercia after his conversion, there would be in this way an infiltration of Christian

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ideas, which would at the least pave the way for further and more systematic teaching.

To what extent the monks took a direct part in the work of conversion it is impossible to say. Their primary task was the furtherance of their own spiritual life within the four walls of their monastery, but it is clear that they must have moved about the countryside to a considerable degree, preaching and teaching, celebrating the Mass, and conducting services generally. We have, unfortunately, no information relating to this part in particular, and must rely on what appears to have happened in the country as a whole.

Churches then began to be built, and congregations assembled as opportunity offered. Priests were multiplied, but at first they were but loosely connected with any one village or locality. Bishops there were, too, but their jurisdiction was ill defined. They tended to be ecclesiastical officials of the various kingdoms, and were liable to overlap one another in a way that led to some confusion. Thus it is more correct to speak of the Bishop of the Mercians, of the East Anglians, of the West Saxons, and so forth, than of clearly marked dioceses centring round a cathedral city, as we do to-day. Our own part fell under the Bishop of the Mercians, who had his seat as far away as Dorchester, near Oxford, or for a time at Leicester, while the villages east of the Cam may have belonged to East Anglia, whose centre was at Elmham in Norfolk.

Organization was needed, not for formal reasons, but as the result of natural growth, and this was forthcoming, thanks to the brilliant inspiration which caused the Pope to fill the vacant Archbishopric of Canterbury from a most unexpected quarter. This was in the year 668. After much careful consideration and the failure to secure his first nominees, his choice fell on a monk named Theodore, born, like St. Paul, in the city of Tarsus, and therefore brought up in the Eastern Church. He was a man of great learning and high character, but not yet even in sub-deacon's orders. This was remedied, and with as little further delay as possible he was fully ordained and consecrated bishop, and proceeded to England to take up his arduous task. He was already old, sixty-five years in fact, but still in the height of vigour physically and spiritually.

Soon after his arrival in this country he set out on an extensive tour to all parts where the Church was established. Then five years later he summoned a national synod at Hertford, the outcome of

which was the issuing of a number of canonical decrees. With some of these, important though they were, we are not concerned. But others dealt with precisely the organization that was so much needed. He divided the country systematically into dioceses, with a bishop presiding over each in his own episcopal city. Bishops were forbidden to trespass in each other's dioceses, nor were they to interfere in monasteries, which remained independent. Clergymen were not to be allowed to leave their diocese without recommendations from their bishop. Similarly monks were to keep to their own monastery. Bishops and clergy alike were forbidden to officiate in a diocese other than their own without permission from the bishop of that diocese.

At the same time he laid the foundation of the parochial system, by which each parish, in village or town, has its own appointed priest, who is specially licensed to it, and bears all the responsibility for the work of the Church within its bounds. This, however, did not reach its final form till long afterwards, but when it did, it was by natural growth from the impetus given by Theodore. What he did at the time was probably more in the way of setting up little colleges of priests, who would serve the neighbourhood. Then, later in the Saxon period, when it became the pride of every thane to see that a church was built on his estate, it became also his duty to see that it was effectively provided for by its own priest.

It will be noticed that Theodore's reign coincided with the time when the evangelization of Fenland was being carried to its completion, so it must have benefited immediately by the new regulations. In addition it was now brought under the sway of Canterbury and the Augustine Church for the first time, as the priests introduced by Peada came from the Lindisfarne rule in the north. Where Etheldreda's allegiance lay it is not possible to say. She was born and brought up, as we have seen, in East Anglia, which was definitely under Canterbury, but she had taken the veil in the north, and came to Ely five years after the appearance of Theodore in the country. In any case, from the start, monasteries maintained their independence of all episcopal rule as far as they could, and we may assume that she adopted this attitude at Ely, while welcoming any form of Church government that would further the work in the district around.

One special feature of Church worship introduced by Theodore, or at any rate in his time, may be mentioned, and that is the spread

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of music. According to Bede: 'The tunes of singing, which until then were only known in Kent, began to be learned through all the churches of England.'

Let us hope that Fenland shared in this novelty, though the first time we definitely hear of music is recorded in the next chapter in connection with Ramsey Abbey.

CHAPTER III

THE DANISH INVASION AND ITS SEQUEL

OF the eighth century there is little to record. The chronicler of Ely sums it up in a brief sentence, saying that under successive abbesses the monastery flourished, and did good work for God and the Church. And the other monasteries also maintained, on the whole, a placid existence, while in the country parts we are left to imagine the development. Doubtless churches were built, and gradually came to have their own parish priests, and any remaining traces of the old heathendom faded out.

But comparative quiet does not always conduce to spiritual vigour. The history of religion, certainly of the Christian religion, has never been one of steady progress, but rather of a succession of waves, each followed by a period of stagnation or degeneracy. And this is the more to be expected in the case of a people still primitive, separated from paganism by new custom, rather than by strong conviction backed by intelligent education.

Such a period had definitely set in by the beginning of the ninth century. Within the monasteries the ideals of the Benedictine Rule were forgotten, or at any rate ignored. Secular clergy intruded, who might be monks in name, but certainly not anything more, bringing with them their wives, or even unmarried women. Among the clergy generally, apart from the monasteries, marriage was unrestrained, and, however we may regard a married clergy to-day as a desirable asset, this was then a sign, not of liberal progress, but of moral decay. Education almost disappeared among the clergy as much as the laity. King Alfred later in the century lamented that very few of the clergy on this side of the Humber could understand their Mass book even in English, still less in Latin. Yet the churches throughout England were, till they were ravaged and burned by the Danes, filled with treasures and books, though the clergy again could not understand them, because they were not written in our language. Bishops and clergy became increasingly instruments of the Crown. Common morality reached its lowest ebb, and the whole condition of things was deplorable to an extent that cannot be indicated in a brief summary like this.

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The downward tendency was accelerated by external trouble in the form of the disastrous Danish invasions. These began about the beginning of the century in the form of a series of raids, which gradually developed into more systematic invasion. For a time Egbert, King of Wessex, to whom the supremacy had passed from the north, was able to hold them in check, and inflict forcible defeats upon them. But his sons were weaker, and the Danes were stronger, and the result was inevitable. The hordes poured across the sea in search of spoil and plunder. They harried the land up and down, wreaking their fury with especial violence on churches and monasteries. For half a century Fenland escaped, but in 870 the Danes wintered in East Anglia, and then the trouble began in earnest. The English army was heavily defeated in a battle near Crowland, and the abbot, Theodore by name, knew that the worst would happen. He accordingly put thirty monks into boats to escape where they could, taking with them the most valued relics, books, charters and what else they could, from the abbey, while he himself stayed with the rest. The Danes charged into the church while Mass was being celebrated, slew the abbot on the altar, and beheaded all the monks on whom they could lay hands. They then broke down all the monuments, and set fire to the church, which was burned to the ground.

Medeshampstede was their next victim. This they treated similarly, putting eighty-three monks to death, and burning the monastery and church.

Soham met a like fate, and then it was the turn of Ely. This, surrounded as it still was by marsh and mere, was easily accessible from the sea, and the Danes came up irresistibly in their boats. They marched straight to the monastery, killed all the monks and nuns, and collected all possible plunder. Village churches that they met on their way were likewise destroyed.

This terrible work raised a protest from no less a person than Etheldreda herself. Two hundred years had passed since she founded the monastery, and for that time it had stood to the glory of God, and, so the story goes, she could not rest while the work of destruction proceeded. One of the Danes approached her sarcophagus with intent to violate it, whereupon she instantly struck him dead.

All through the country church life was disorganized. Bishoprics as well as monasteries and village churches were left unfilled. In

the Midlands the Bishop of Leicester fled to Dorchester, near Oxford, and Lichfield became, and remained for too long, vacant.

Then in the fullness of time a man was born who was destined to prove himself one of the heroes of history, transforming entirely the face of the country, and introducing an era which was fraught with boundless possibilities. It is impossible here to give even the briefest estimate of the life and work of King Alfred. He stands out justly in children's stories and in learned histories as a giant among men. His struggle and ultimate victorious settlement with the Danes has been alluded to in the first chapter, and it must suffice here to make the bald statement that almost as memorable was the reformation which he initiated in the Church and religious life of his people. His life covered exactly the second half of the ninth century, and he died, all too soon, at the age of little more than fifty in the year 900.

His work did not bear its full fruit immediately. More drastic changes might perhaps have defeated their own ends, as being imposed from above on an unwilling Church, but by the middle of the tenth century the restoration of monastic life to its purer form was well advanced. In this connection it is well to realize that the monasteries did at this time form the bulwark of the country's religious life. They were everywhere the focus of the Church, and the stable element. The parochial system, though envisaged long before by Archbishop Theodore, had scarcely yet reached its full development, and the monks were on the whole better educated, and their dedication more concentrated. They were the source from which the smaller streams emanated, and, if they failed, the country became parched.

As times began to become quieter, men drifted back to the ruined monasteries. We read that at Ely after a few years eight clerics returned and started afresh to conduct the divine services, but these were apparently not monks at all, but secular clergy. Of these eight, one lived to a great age, until the reign of Edred in the middle of the tenth century, and was joined by a number of others, who found, it may be, an easy and undisturbed existence there, untroubled by scruples or hard work. For a gloomy report is given of their manner of life, in which the moral standard sank to the lowest pitch, and all monastic rule was entirely forgotten. Wives and other women were freely admitted, and monasteries became a byword.

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But at length the good work of Alfred bore fruit. In 959 his great-grandson Edgar inherited the kingdom, now greatly enlarged by the recovery of that part of the country that had been under the Danelagh. He came to the throne as a mere boy, and died in 975 at the age of thirty-two, but in that time much was effected. For his reign was more peaceful than any before or for long after, troubled by no rebellion within or invasion from without, and he was blessed by having the best of counsellors.

At the beginning of his reign only two monasteries in England were conducted according to any true monastic rule, those of Glastonbury and Abingdon. The Abbot of Glastonbury was Dunstan, who soon afterwards became Archbishop of Canterbury, and was thenceforward Edgar's right-hand man in both Church and State. And the Abbot of Abingdon was Ethelwold, a former pupil of Dunstan's at Glastonbury who a few years later was Bishop of Winchester. A third man to be noticed is Oswald, Bishop of Worcester and later (in addition) Archbishop of York.

These men set themselves to work, with the full approval and support of the king, to purify the monasteries, and to introduce into them all the strict rule of St. Benedict, so that all should be governed on a uniform principle. Ethelwold was ruthless in ejecting summarily all secular clergy, and replacing them forthwith by true monks. His colleagues were less drastic in their methods, but had the same grand object in view.

It may seem contrary to the three-hundred-year-old ruling of Theodore that a Bishop of Winchester should exercise his power all over the country, East Anglia included, but so it was. This may have been due in part to the partial chaos which still reigned after the national upheaval, but also it was a foretaste of the custom, so prevalent later in medieval times, by which the king chose as his bishops men who could direct the affairs of his realm as much as those of their own dioceses.

It was Ethelwold who was chiefly instrumental in dealing with the Fenland monasteries. The year 870 had seen their destruction; in 970 they were restored, with the exception of Soham, which never rose again. Ely also was in some danger of sharing the fate of Soham, as both a Greek bishop and a Dane wished to buy the site, for what purposes it is not known. But Edgar, prompted by faithful advisers, refused to let them have it, ruling that it should return to its original purpose.

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He then granted a new charter couched in emphatic terms, restoring to it its civil rights over the Isle, which had been seized, with the accompanying revenues, by a former King of Mercia in the days of depression. He also gave extensive endowments, not the least of which was one-fourth of the revenue of the province of Cambridge, so making it one of the wealthiest abbeys in the country.

Another valuable gift was the estate of Dereham, whereby hangs a tale. For Etheldreda's youngest sister, Withburga, had on her father's death founded a convent there, and there she was buried.

The new church at Ely was dedicated by Archbishop Dunstan on the Feast of the Purification, when he installed as first abbot Brithnoth, Prior of Winchester, whence he was brought by Ethelwold. This Brithnoth was a great man, and was determined from the start to restore his monastery to at least as high a level as it had held under the abbesses who preceded him. Characteristically, with this end in view, he decided that the fame of the house would be increased if it possessed the body of Withburga, as well as that of her more famous sister.

Opposition was likely to be encountered at Dereham. So he journeyed thither with a goodly retinue, as though to take over the rights conferred by the king. When the brethren were inside, preparing for a feast, he ordered his men suddenly to snatch the lady's body and convey it away with all speed. He had in waiting a carriage to take it as far as Brandon, and thence he carried it by boat to Ely.

Yet another endowment conferred by Ethelwold on Ely produced some curious legislation. He bought an estate in Bluntisham from the owner, Wilnothus. The vendor sent his son to Ely to fetch the money, and handed over possession of the land, with the title-deeds, to the bishop, together with £7 for the men, cattle and corn in Bluntisham.

After King Edgar's death the sons of Bogan, of Hemingford, laid claim to the property. They declared that their uncle Tope owned it by inalienable right, for his grandmother had come from Bluntisham, and had done service to King Edward, Alfred's son, at the time when Count Toli held Huntingdonshire against the king. They claimed, therefore, that they should retain her land.

There were old men still alive who remembered Toli being killed near the Thames, and maintained that what the sons of Bogan said

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was rubbish; that the king had acquired the land in Huntingdonshire before he held Grantebrugge; and moreover that there was no land so absolutely held in the county as not to be liable to sale.

It was decided that Wilnothus should quiet things in Bluntisham on behalf of Ethelwold, or, should he fail, that he should return the money.

The whole County of Huntingdon was now convened to adjudicate on the matter, and Wilnothus and the sons of Bogan were summoned to attend. In the end judgment was given against the claimants, on two grounds: first, because they had lied about Toli's grandmother, and secondly because the man who has the title-deeds has the better claim.

The end of Abbot Brithnoth was a tragic one. The story is that he journeyed to the New Forest to see King Ethelred on some matter of business. In the forest he dismounted, and went to a remote place for the purposes of nature. To make sure that he was alone, he looked all round, and saw a short way off Queen Elstreda, and, imagining that she was a horse and not a woman, he exposed himself.

He completed his business with the king, and began to move away quietly. He was, however, caught by the queen, and the story that follows is an exact repetition of that of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, except that the unhappy abbot was not imprisoned, but murdered. His monks then took up his body and carried it to Ely for burial.

The fame of Ely was enhanced by a fresh outbreak of miracles, wrought by St. Etheldreda. A certain archpriest was heard to question her incorruptibility, and he was answered by these manifestations. Many of them are of the familiar type. A woman who had suffered for many years was healed; a boy who was deaf and dumb was given hearing and speech; with many other such. The most interesting story is of a servant girl who was sent by a priest into the garden to gather some herbs. In doing so she impaled her hand on a sharp log, and her hand stuck so firmly to it that she could not release it. It had to be cut away, but even so it proved impossible to remove what appears to have been an immense splinter. For five years she was tortured with pain, but now at last she was healed by the glorious intervention of Etheldreda.

A few years later King Ethelred added to the dignities of Ely by granting to the church the right to share the royal chancellorship with

the abbeys of St. Augustine and Glastonbury, each of the three holding office for four months in the year. By this word it means apparently more what we should denote by chaplaincy, though it may be that certain civil functions were attached.

Crowland, Thorney and Medeshampstede were restored at the same time as Ely, the last named beginning from this time to assume the name of Peterborough.

Meantime Oswald, Bishop of Worcester, and later Archbishop of York, was carrying out his reforms in Mercia by gentler methods than Ethelwold pursued. He was reluctant to expel directly the clergy he found in the monasteries, and in some cases preferred to found new establishments for his genuine monks. Under his kindly influence a large number of seculars clamoured to be admitted to the monastic vows, with the result that he found far more on his hands than he could accommodate in existing houses. He therefore applied to the king for new accommodation, and various abbeys were suggested. But finally the choice fell on new ground altogether.

He happened to meet at the funeral of a nobleman one Ailwin, alderman of East Anglia, and he put the position before him. Ailwin agreed to present land for a new monastery from one of his estates in a place 'surrounded by marshy bog, suitable for the habitation of such men, for it is far from the concourse of men, and conscious of solitary quiet'.

So Ramsey Abbey came into being, with princely endowments showered on it. The king gave the church of Godmanchester; Oswald bought from the king the village called Needingworth in exchange for many precious relics; he also presented the abbey with the village of Wistow, and property elsewhere in the district. Ailwin gave land in Upwood, with the fisheries of neighbouring pools, as well as land in 'Helingeye', which on all sides was surrounded by water and deep marsh.

A fine church was built of stone with two towers, and in it was placed as a further gift from Ailwin an organ, with copper pipes, placed in close ranks over one of the windows, which was struck by a strong wind on feast days, and gave out the sweetest melodies and a clanging which resounded far and wide.

King Edgar granted a charter confirming the endowments, and also conferring unlimited rights of sanctuary, with impunity of goods and limbs and life to all who should avail themselves of it.

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But less than twenty years later one of the towers collapsed, carrying with it a considerable portion of the church, so that nearly all had to be rebuilt, this time more securely, so that we hear of no further accident. The renovated church was solemnly dedicated by Archbishop Oswald in the year 991.

The following year Ailwin, the great benefactor of the abbey, died, and was buried in the church. And ten years after that the bones of St. Ivo were brought from Slepe, as recorded in Chapter I. We may note in passing that the arithmetic of the monks seems somewhat at fault, as this is definitely stated to have happened in the year 1001, and five hundred years before that takes us long before the days of St. Augustine. If we may amend that and read four hundred, it might be more accurate.

Continuing briefly the story of Ramsey, it is recorded that the abbey refused provisions to Earl Brithnoth, who was fighting against the Danes, on their renewed attacks, with the result that he turned to their rival Ely, where he was received with open arms and offered sustenance for as many men as he liked to bring. To the lasting chagrin of Ramsey, Ely was rewarded by further generous grants of land.

A somewhat humorous incident is provided by the escapade of four young scholars, whose zeal in bell-ringing outran their discretion, and one of the bells was seriously injured. The brethren were furious and ran in tears to the abbot. He, however, took a milder view of the iniquity, on the principle that boys will be boys, and let them off with a fatherly lecture. One of the four lived to be Bishop of Dorchester, and, remembering his youthful adventure, presented land to the abbey at Ramsey, by way of abundant compensation.

The tomb of St. Ivo continued to be a valuable asset, and the ancient chronicles fill twenty-five folio pages with the record of miracles performed there. Abbot Ednoth, who had been responsible for bringing the saint, was himself cured of gout, after suffering long nights of sleepless anguish. And a monk named Odo of Peterborough, who was languishing at the point of death with a dire disease, suddenly bethought him of the saint, who promptly appeared to him, touched him, and wrought an instantaneous cure.

One feature that was strongly emphasized in the monastic revival was education. Alfred, as we have seen, had lamented,

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apparently with justification, that the clergy were thoroughly ignorant, and ignorance on the part of the clergy involved the same among the laity. For this the decay of the monasteries was largely responsible, and to that fact the king and his advisers were fully alive when they embarked on their reforms.

Especially did a new foundation like Ramsey offer a golden opportunity for the introduction of education for all, from monks to children, and a school was started at once under the first prior, Germanus, whom Oswald brought over to England from Fleury for the purpose. It was no doubt this school that produced the four obstreperous bell-ringers mentioned above.

The early death of King Edgar meant a certain slackening of the reins, and this was shown by an anti-monastic reaction in Mercia. The cause was more political than religious, as some of the leading men in Mercia had resented somewhat keenly the ejection of the secular clergy who were their nominees and supporters, and they in turn set to work to throw out the monks once more. The movement took a violent turn and spread to East Anglia, but here it was restrained by the same strong men, Oswald and Ailwin, so that the fen monasteries escaped, and continued with but slight disturbance.

More serious dangers ensued with the renewed attacks from marauding Danes at the turn of the century, but again our district suffered no noticeable damage, and was able to hold its own till the peaceful time of the great Canute. He proved a strong supporter of monks in general, and of the East Anglian houses in particular. He fell into the habit of visiting Ely every Candlemas. The story goes that as he was approaching the city in his barge on one occasion he heard sounds of lovely music floating through the air. He stopped and inquired what this was, and was told that it was the monks singing at their evening service. He thereupon raised a chant himself with the words of the old song attributed to him:

Sweetly sang the monks of Ely
As Canute the king sailed by.
Soldiers, row me near the spire,
That we may hear th'angelic choir.

This second Danish period witnessed a combination of steady growth in the Church and a decline from the peak reached by Edgar, Ethelwold and Oswald. The parochial system by this time

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had well-nigh reached its final form; and village churches were everywhere built, most of them still of wood, but many of stone. It is estimated that by the Norman Conquest the number of churches in Cambridgeshire was almost as great as at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

But the monasteries seemed unable to maintain their high level, and, while actual abuses were not so rampant, the strictness of their rule left much to be desired, and there was much room for the stiffening influence of William.

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By the time of the Conquest the parochial system was fully established. It is so familiar to us that we take for granted that each parish church shall have its own officiating priest, and it is regarded as a retrograde step when two or more villages are combined under one man. From the start thanes, or lords of the manor, were accustomed to erect churches on their estates, but it did not follow immediately that they also secured their priest to themselves. Archbishop Theodore, as long ago as the seventh century, did begin to work in this direction, but there is evidence that some districts were worked by a group of clergy, like a little college, controlling a miniature diocese.

It is unfortunate that Domesday Book gives us no help in Cambridgeshire. In three neighbouring counties no fewer than eight hundred churches are mentioned, but here the Commissioner had no interest in priest or church as such. He was concerned to record all taxable property without specifying its nature, and mentions only two churches, at Cambridge and Teversham, besides two monastic houses, at Shelford and Meldreth.

We seldom have a glimpse of the parish priest, who seems to be classed with the villeins, men who were not slaves, but held their virgate of land, to which they were tied, being unable to leave the service of their overlord. No doubt priests were often of this class, and two hundred years later Chaucer speaks of a priest whose brother was a ploughman, and finds nothing extraordinary in it. Thus at Bourn two priests, who as vassals of the thane could not separate from his church, held one hide, equivalent to four virgates, or one hundred and twenty acres. They were comparatively well off. At Chesterton the priest had one hide, and at Drayton as much as three. At Tadlow he held one hide and one virgate, which he might sell if he liked, showing him to be on a slightly higher social scale.

Thanks to the reticence of Domesday it is not always possible to decide whether these holdings were the private property of the man, or were attached to the church as an endowment. Often it was undoubtedly the latter, and we see how from the earliest times

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the haphazard system of endowment began, from which the Church has suffered ever since, the extent of it depending on the whim or the wealth of the thane.

Among the priests, however, there were also not a few of superior standing, younger sons even of great families, or middle class men with brains and ambition, who could see themselves rising to high offices in the Church.

These of whom we are now speaking were 'secular clergy' in sharp distinction to the monastic orders discussed in the last chapter. There is no sinister suggestion about the term, as though they were just worldly men, or even anti-religious. The word means that they lived in the outside world, and did not separate themselves from it and seclude themselves in special institutions. It will be remembered that monks were forbidden to hold parishes except for very special reasons, a prohibition which was strictly enforced under Archbishop Anselm. But these were the days when monasticism was at its zenith, and for the two centuries or so after the Conquest the seculars were less in popular favour than the monks. After that, when moral and spiritual decay set in, in the monasteries, the parish priests came to their own.

For the present they suffered grievously by seeing their revenues again and again seized in whole or in part, and 'appropriated' to the monasteries to enrich them further. A typical instance is what happened when the Priory of Canons Regular was formed at St. Giles, Cambridge, shortly after the Norman Conquest. They were given the tithes belonging to the rectories of Bourn, Madingley, Rampton, Comberton, Harston, Hauxton, Dedlow and Guilden Morden. That meant that they were now responsible for these parishes, and, as they were unable to serve them themselves, they put in substitutes, or 'vicars', to whom they would either leave the lesser tithes of the parishes, or pay a stipend, very often a miserable pittance. Hence arose the distinction between a vicar and a rector. Where the revenue was not appropriated, the man on the spot continued to be rector. Where the monasteries were in control, there was a vicar.

Such appropriations were multiplied at intervals, especially in favour of the Ely convent. To take just a few examples, in the first half of the thirteenth century, Witchford and Littleport were given by the bishop of the day, and a few years later Melbourn and Swaffham; and it is interesting to note that three of these four are

to-day in the gift of the Dean and Chapter of Ely, while Littleport is in the hands of the Bishop.

Then in the next century Trumpington was alienated to another religious house, that of the Sisters of Haliwell, near Shoreditch. It passed to Trinity College as part of the endowment bestowed by Henry VIII.

It may be noted that appropriation changed the status of these livings from rectories to vicarages, as they have since continued.

In the later Middle Ages, when monasteries were on the wane and the University in the ascendant, the tendency was to make appropriations to the colleges. So in 1395 Bishop Fordham, in his anxiety to support the College of St. Peter, or Peterhouse, as a bulwark against the rising tide of heresy, presented it with the rectory of Cherry Hinton, which likewise was thenceforward a vicarage.

One more instance may be mentioned. About 1400, Haddenham was appropriated to the Archdeaconry of Ely, in compensation for the transfer of part of the archdeacon's jurisdiction to the bishop. It is still in the gift of the archdeacon.

During the same period another title came into being, besides 'rector' and 'vicar', for the incumbents of the most valuable livings would seldom be in residence, as they might be Fellows of Colleges, or officials in cathedrals or collegiate churches in any part of the country, or in the service of the Crown or of some nobleman. Thus Robert Hyndmers, rector of Bluntisham, seems chiefly to have been occupied in the diocese of Durham, where he was dean of the collegiate church of Lanchester. These absentees hired 'curates' to minister in their neglected parishes, men generally of the same class as most of the villagers, with very elementary education, and burdened with no social obligations such as the rectors, or even vicars, had. Their duties were mostly perfunctory, to be punctual at the altar, baptize and marry, visit the sick and bury the dead, and to hear confessions at rare intervals. For this they were wretchedly paid by the wealthy absentees. It was not till the time of the Reformation that plurality was seriously dealt with.

The extent of the appropriations is well indicated by a scrutiny of the Diocesan Directory of to-day. Excluding the deaneries of Bourn, Camps, Cheveley, and Shingay, which are outside the fen district proper, there are now one hundred and three vicarages to sixty-one rectories, and Camps and Shingay also have a strong

majority of vicarages. In Cambridge itself the only rectory is St. Botolph's.

Still many of the most valuable rectories were left intact, for monasteries like Ramsey, which held the advowsons of most of the churches in the deanery of St. Ives, and Ely, which similarly held many in its neighbourhood, were glad to present to such places clerks who would assist them in business and legal matters. So it was profitable to leave unappropriated churches whose fruits would afford useful retaining fees for such people; and Peterborough, for example, did not appropriate some of its best livings, like Oundle in Northants, and Brighthurst in Leicestershire, till the very end of the fifteenth century when the finances of the monastery were in a bad way.

Another actual, though quite illegal, distinction between monks and secular clergy was in the matter of marriage. Celibacy was the rule for both, and in the case of monks it was necessarily adhered to. But it was very different with the seculars. Throughout these centuries repeated attempts are found to enforce the rule, but never with lasting success. In Saxon times laws were passed enjoining bishops and abbots, monks and nuns, and all priests to live chastely according to their rule. Then in 1076, following a threat from Pope Gregory VII, the great Hildebrand, of excommunication against all married priests, it was decreed in England that canons should not be married, but that parochial clergy were not called upon to put away wives if they had them. Henry I allowed clergy to retain their wives on payment of a fine, out of which he reaped a substantial sum. In the thirteenth century many clergy were openly or secretly married, and it was pleaded that it was better to sanction the custom than to encourage concubinage. An interesting allusion will be noticed in what follows.

In 1364 Simon Langham, who held the bishopric of Ely for a few years before being promoted to Canterbury, held a synod at Ely, to which he delivered a lengthy charge. This is of value as indicating, by way of censure on remissness, that he had noted in his diocese what were regarded as the normal duties and standard of life expected from the clergy.

It is not possible to quote it in its entirety, but a number of selected passages may be given.

Every pastor is to know the decalogue, and frequently preach

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and expound the same, as also the seven deadly sins and the seven sacraments.

It is the special duty of priests to hear confession and exact penitence, and to teach the formula of baptism 'in the vulgar tongue'.

They are to know and teach the Greater and Lesser Symbols, i.e. the Athanasian and Apostles' Creeds.

They are to teach the people to bow reverently when the Host is elevated and when they see it being carried to the sick. In such processions a light should precede, as it is the brightness of eternal light. At the same time a bell is to be carried with the light.

Priests are to visit the sick by day and night, lest any should die without confession, communion or extreme unction.

In the church the divine office is to be read in whole and devoutly, with lessons, hymns and psalms.

Boys are to be taught the Lord's Prayer and the Creed, as well as Hail Mary, and how to make the sign of the Cross. Older people should be included.

No priest is to have a wife, and if any has had one, he is not to hold a benefice. He is to have no woman in his house, whether a relation or any other.

Priests are not to be given to strong drink or to gluttony, nor are they to frequent taverns.

They are to avoid all greed, and no ordained man is to hold any magisterial power.

No rector is to agree with his priest [i.e. his vicar or curate] that he may in return for certain stipend receive the fees for endowed periodic Masses, for that would suggest that he was otherwise insufficiently paid, and in addition the priest would not then perform these obligations when undertaken, or would neglect his parish duties.

Revenues assigned by the laity for lights [see later in this chapter and the next for chantries and obits] are not to be converted by rectors or vicars to their own use.

On Easter Day laymen's oblations are not to be received after Mass when they communicate, as this is a clear sign of greed, and a hindrance to devotion.

Priests are not to mix with actors, mimes or jesters, nor to play with dice. Nor are they to bear arms.

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Sons are not to succeed their fathers in churches.

'We have heard that some priests extort money for Penance or other Sacraments', as, for instance, in the case of a homicide. He [? the priest or the homicide] should make his offering for any dead in the same parish.

Priests are not to make their deacons hear confessions. [Apparently they 'palmed off' such duties on their inferiors.]

All rectors and vicars are to reside by their churches, except for some good cause.

In each church there shall be one deacon and one sub-deacon, if provision allows; otherwise there shall be one cleric, who shall assist the priest in the divine offices.

There is to be no trading in sacred places.

Cemeteries are to be enclosed, and the execrable custom in some churches of using them for a festival of fools, so turning the house of prayer into a home of sport, is to be stopped.

They are solemnly to denounce the habit of putting up rams on wheels, or arranging any other games for prizes.

Drinking parties called 'Scothales' are prohibited.

In annual visits to the mother church [see later] parishioners are not to vie with one another to get in front with flags.

No one is to entertain the concubines of clergy.

The laity are not to stand or sit among the clergy in the chancel during a celebration.

These injunctions cover a wide ground, relating to the ministerial and moral life of the clergy, both of which seem to have called for episcopal reproof and guidance. One or two points may be enlarged upon.

First, there is the reference to the observance of Sunday, when it was the regular custom for players, hawkers, jugglers and such like, to assemble in the churchyard, or even in the church itself, and display their wares or perform their tricks. In Ely Cathedral there were shops, in some cases permanent buildings, let to merchants for a term of years or for life. Sacrists' accounts from the thirteenth century down to the time of Henry VIII tell of these markets and fairs. Hard though it may be for us to realize it, this practice was far from being as reprehensible then as it would appear to-day, and the prohibition would be regarded as striking

hardly on harmless people, but it did need to be kept within due limits. We recall a famous story from the Gospel.

One form of sport mentioned in the injunctions cannot have escaped notice. It consisted in 'putting up [battering] rams on wheels'. This is somewhat obscure, but it would seem that the game was something like this. A post was driven into the ground and on it fixed a cross beam on a swivel, loaded at the ends with heavy weights. The competitor rode or ran past, and struck with his lance so as to hit the target, whatever it exactly was, and escape before the weight swung round and hit him. This was done amid much merriment and laughter. But too many serious accidents had occurred, so that it was considered too dangerous a sport, and the clergy were accordingly enjoined to denounce it. The game must have been very like that so delightfully described by Trollope in *Barchester Towers* as part of the entertainment at the Ullathorne Sports.

It had no particular connection with the church, unless indeed it used to take place in the churchyard, but the clergy were the obvious people to discourage such an unpleasant sport.

Next there is the interesting picture of processions to the mother church with flags and banners, and one group pushing its unseemly way to gain precedence over another. This needs a longer explanation.

As villages spread to outlying districts, and hamlets appeared, chapels were built to meet their needs, sometimes by the lord of the manor, as had happened in the case of the original parish churches, sometimes by the rector. Except with a special licence these had not the right to administer any of the sacraments, including baptism and marriage, or to bury, without running foul of the mother church, which jealously guarded its privileges. Some, however, gradually acquired the rights of a parish church, and could lawfully perform all the services. Others retained their humbler position as chapels. The village of Chettisham had such a chapel, which only long afterwards was separated from St. Mary's, Ely, and made into an independent parish church with full rights. A more important instance is that of March, which originally was a chapelry of the extensive and wealthy rectory of Doddington, though in modern times, of course, it has far outstripped its parent. Barway was, and still is, a chapelry of Soham, and so was Manea of Coveney.

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Four miles from the parish church of Wisbech there was an outlying chapel at a tiny place called Murrow, under the high fen dyke, 'a very payneful, noisome way, and commonly unsound'. Every year they lived in fear of a serious breach in the banks. The chapel was licensed by the bishop from time to time, and to maintain a priest some former inhabitants had given lands, which were to remain in the hands of the chapel wardens. Murrow is now in the parish of Southea.

It was a strict rule that once a year, usually in mid-Lent, all parishioners, including those who resided in these outlying parts, should repair to the mother church, which they seem to have done in grand procession, with flags and banners. This is the origin of the familiar 'Mothering Sunday', of which the more popular explanations, as, for instance, that it was a holiday on which maids in domestic service could visit their homes, are merely modern inventions to account for the term long after the custom had fallen into disuse.

We shall see in a later chapter how men found themselves in trouble as late as the seventeenth century for neglecting their parish church and communicating elsewhere.

We have spoken so far of priests employed in one capacity or another in parish work. But their numbers were far too great for more than a fraction of them to be so accounted for.¹ The number of recorded ordinations shows this clearly, for in one year, 1340, Bishop Simon de Montacute ordained as many as two hundred and forty-nine, and a century later Bishop Gray in the twenty years from 1458 to 1478 had enough for their names to fill thirty-four closely written folio pages. These numbers certainly need some scrutiny, for of the two hundred and forty-nine the majority were men in minor Orders, acolytes, sub-deacons, and deacons, and only fifty-nine were priests. Of these again, a good proportion were for the monasteries, and some few for other dioceses, but the remainder must still have been numerous. Fortunately for them, there were other openings than those presented by direct parish work.

First, there were jobs which have a purely secular (using the

¹ For the vast number of ordained men in the country, from acolytes and sub-deacons upwards, amounting to something like one in twelve of the total adult male population: see J. R. H. Moorman, *Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century*, Chapter V.

word in its modern, and not original, sense) sound for us, as clerks for merchants and landowners, or for higher ecclesiastics. We notice how the transition in the meaning of the word 'clerk' came about, the primary sense remaining in our phrase 'Clerk in Holy Orders', though otherwise it has passed to the more common usage. It was, of course, among the clergy for the most part that men were forthcoming with sufficient education for this type of work.

Then there were private chaplains to the nobility, and teachers in the many Grammar Schools, which were staffed for the most part by clergy.

So far these would be chiefly men in minor Orders, but there were more directly religious vocations as well which called for fully ordained priests, chiefly in connection with obits and chantries, and with the medieval Gilds.

The meaning of the word 'obit' is 'death', or sometimes our 'obituary'. It is also used for a service performed at a funeral or commemoration of a dead person, and rents of land were frequently bequeathed to perpetuate in this way the memory of some patron or beneficiary saint. The money was used in the first instance to provide tiny lights to burn before one of the altars in the church. The priest would then be paid his fee, and any remainder after that would be given to the poor. The lands left for this purpose were known as Lamp Lands.

Instances of such obits are innumerable, and it will suffice to mention a couple. It has been said above that the Rectory of Trumpington was alienated to the Sisters of Haliwell. This was done in 1343 by Bishop Simon de Montacute, who made the condition that the sisters should celebrate his obit annually in their convent, and at the same time give to the poor two quarters of wheat made into bread of the same kind that they ate in the convent.

In 1491 William Vale left the residue of his estate to St. Etheldreda's, Histon, on condition that Mass with an obit be kept every year for his soul, and 4d. be paid to the priest.

In this way the income of either the parish priest, or in some cases some other specially appointed priest, was augmented, even if to a small extent. And the same idea on a more elaborate scale led to the famous chantries, a word which, strictly speaking, signifies services sung or intoned, and which by a natural extension

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came to be used for the endowments left for the purpose, for the chapels specially built and set apart, and even for the priests who officiated, though in these latter cases it is better to retain the more accurate 'Chantry Chapels' and 'Chantry Priests'.

Special altars were erected, usually in the aisles of existing churches, and priests, sometimes other than the parish priests, were appointed to minister at them. In many cases the aisles would actually be extended, or a transept chapel added on, in modern days forming a convenient receptacle for the organ. As the priest was a special one, sometimes a new door would be made, to give him independent access to his altar. This accounts for the abundance of supernumerary altars in practically every village church, of which often the only remaining sign is a piscina, with, it may be, an aumbry or other niche. There must have been very few churches without at least one such chantry, and some had three or four.

The endowments may have been left as freehold to the chantry priest in exactly the same way as parish endowments were left, in which case the priest was as secure and irremovable as his brother in the parish church. Or it may have been put in the hands of feoffees, who merely paid the chaplain a salary, and used the rest of the funds, in some cases considerable, for public works, like the repair of roads and bridges, maintenance of embankments, supporting free schools, or providing a dowry for poor girls.

One of the earliest instances we have, which dates from the time before the system had become fully established, is from Barnwell Priory, where two priests were to say Mass for ever in the almonry for the souls of the two men who built the chapel, sixty acres of land being bequeathed for the purpose; and another priest was to do likewise for Robert of Fulbourn at the altar of St. Augustine. Storehouses opposite the church of the Holy Sepulchre were assigned for this.

There are splendid chantry chapels in Ely Cathedral, well described by Archdeacon Seiriol Evans in his *Short History of Ely Cathedral*. One stands at the east end of the north aisle, and was built by Bishop Alcock in 1488. It is remarkable, among other things, for the repeated device of the bishop's 'rebus', or play on his name, consisting of a cock standing on a globe.

Another is Bishop West's Chapel from Henry VIII's reign.

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Here his motto 'Gracia Dei sum id quod sum' occurs several times, the Latin version of the text 'By the grace of God I am what I am'.

Bishop Hugh Northwold (1220-54) also founded a chantry of four chaplains, known as the Chantry on the Green, in the cathedral, to pray for his soul.

In Swavesey there was a chantry chapel quite distinct from the church, which in the seventeenth century was found in use as a cottage in the village.

Little St. Mary's, Cambridge, had two chantries. The earlier one was dedicated to the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and to St. Margaret by Thomas Lane, Master of Peterhouse in the middle of the fifteenth century. The other one was erected by John Warkworth, Master of Peterhouse, and consecrated by Bishop Alcock in 1487. This was destroyed at the Dissolution in Henry VIII's reign, and a chapel built on the site within the last fifteen years from to-day.

At Cherry Hinton¹ there were chantries at the east end of the aisles, screened off by paradoses which were still in position two hundred years ago, but have since disappeared. The lower panels on the screens were painted with figures of saints and others, and curious devices and inscriptions were carved on the heads of the seats, such as: 'Ave Maria Gracia Plena'; 'Grace follweth Govern-ance'; and a figure of a Fool in a hood with a pipe and a ball, saying: 'Wyt my Pype I wel play, and wyt my Bal yf I may.'

Another was founded at Haslingfield in the reign of Edward I by Sir Robert de Scales in a chapel attached to his manor house, and was only licensed by the bishop for the performance of regular Divine Service half a century later.

In 1414 benefactors left sixty acres of land in Tyd St. Mary and Sutton 'to found a Chantry of one priest to celebrate Divine Service daily in the parish, for their good estate and for their souls after death, and the good estate of all who in the future shall support the Chantry'.

In Whittlesford the chantry chapel was for a long time a separate building, till it was combined with the church in 1469. Then there was in Queen Mary's reign a priest in Linton, other than the vicar, named John Lorden, who was apparently a wealthy man, for he left a legacy in lands and rents to the chantry of Lin-

¹ *Churches of Cambridgeshire*, Camden Society.

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ton, and in addition £10 a year to the chantry priest to teach the children of Linton and Hildersham.

In Linton¹ also Squire Robert Paris died about the year 1500, and had a magnificent funeral. The rites were to be repeated six months later and on each anniversary of his death. For this purpose he bequeathed a noble, i.e. 6s. 8d., out of which sum 10d. was to be paid to the curate who sang the dirge and gave the candle, 4d. each to three other officiating priests, 2d. to the clerk, 2d. to the sexton, 1d. to each of six children, 2d. each to five poor folk in honour of the wounds of Christ, a shilling to be expended in coarse bread for distribution, and 6d. to the ringers.

Such instances could be multiplied indefinitely. Suffice it to say that the total number must have been very large. There is a list of thirty-two chantries which were suppressed at the Reformation, but this must be far from complete, and many others must have lapsed before that time.

This suppression was a calamity of the first order. It may well have been necessary to abolish the Masses for the dead, which were the prime object of obits and chantries, as being contrary to reformed doctrine, but the subsidiary uses might well have been spared. It has been said that it was as though in our day all local benefit societies, schools, almshouses and charities in general were swept away, carrying with them much of the outward supports of simple reverence and religion. In particular, illiteracy became far more prevalent in succeeding generations than it had been in the Middle Ages.

There remain the Gilds, which also demanded chaplains, and absorbed a large number of clergy, if not so many as the chantries. These Gilds were not unlike in essence a mixture of our Mutual Benevolent Societies and the Brotherhood of Freemasonry. For they cultivated a strong fraternal spirit, which they carried into practice by assistance to their members in a great many ways.

Their origin goes back into obscure antiquity, but they were in Christian times fostered by the Church, and encouraged in their double work of supporting the body and saving the soul. One of the earliest fraternities whose statutes are extant, not only in England but in Europe, is that of Cambridge, dating from before the Norman Conquest. But this seems to have been of a pagan nature,

¹ Dr. W. M. Palmer, *History of Linton*.

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concerned chiefly with help in blood-feuds. But in later centuries they gradually assumed a more religious basis, and merchants and craftsmen alike centred round their Gild chapel, with its altar and appointed priest, while some were actually founded on a religious basis.

Their number greatly increased in the Middle Ages, especially from the thirteenth century. Every member took an oath on admission, paid an entrance fee, and made a small contribution annually. The brethren were aided in old age, sickness and poverty, or in case of accident by robbery, fire or other cause. Lights were supported at altars, feasts and processions held on appropriate occasions, funerals attended, masses for the dead provided. In addition public works were assisted, like the repair of roads and bridges, or of town walls. Some also supported schools, where the Gild chaplains would assist in the teaching, and would read and write for those who were unable to do so themselves. They provided a kind of market, or exchange. So in many ways, socially, religiously, commercially, they became the very centre of village or town life.

From the nature of their constitution Gilds flourished more in towns and the larger villages than in smaller communities. The earliest detailed information that we have about them comes from the Gild certificates of the time of Richard II, who in 1388 called for a full account of them all. It will be noticed that this was seven years after the Peasants' Revolt, when there was much unrest in the country, and it may be that Gilds were suspected of being used for illegal meetings. In any case, a large number were started about the beginning of this reign, and it was, no doubt, felt that a watchful eye must be kept on them.

Many of the certificates in Cambridgeshire are still in existence, and they show that there were eight in Cambridge, eleven in Ely, six in Wisbech, and thirty-three in the smaller towns and villages, making a total of fifty-eight in all. The objects for which they were formed are much as summarized above, but it is noteworthy that only in six is there any mention of relief for the sick and infirm. Littleport claimed two of these, Stretham two, Chesterton and Stow-by-Quy one each, while Bottisham and Swaffham mention 'relief of the poor while under ecclesiastical censure'.

One of the most important was the Gild of the Holy Trinity in Cambridge. Of this we read: 'If the means of the Gild enables it,

and the Vicar of Holy Trinity consents, a Chaplain shall be appointed. And there shall be a candle-bearer, enriched with the carving of the Holy Trinity, on the top of which a candle shall be burnt on Sundays and Feast Days, as long as the means of the Gild allow it.' On the Eve of the Feast of the Holy Trinity the brethren processed in their livery, two and two, to the church to hear First Evensong, and the next day to hear Matins, Mass and Second Evensong. Any brother who was absent without the excuse of sickness or some other pressing reason had to pay a fine of two pounds of wax. No priest could take any office in the Gild other than that of chaplain. These and other ordinances had been approved by the Bishop of Ely a few years previously, and at the same time he granted an Indulgence of forty days to all who helped the Gild.

There seem to have been two Gilds of the Blessed Virgin in Cambridge, one of them attached to St. Botolph's, and the other in honour of the Annunciation. This last was founded in 1379, and had the curious rule that no parson, baker or wife shall be admitted, unless the husband of the said wife is already a member.

The inclusion of women is interesting, and in fact all villages except Tydd St. Giles and Haslingfield refer to sisters as well as brethren. In one case it is laid down that there shall be an equal number of men and women. In another it is ruled that there shall be a chaplain, unless the funds of the Gild fall below ten marks, in which case the goods shall be bestowed in maintenance of a light in the church and of poor brethren.

The evolution in the functions of a Gild is shown at Wisbech, where one was formed purely for devotional purposes. Before long it established an almshouse; then it offered to keep the dykes in repair; and finally it became recognized as the primary civic authority in the town.

This is probably the same Wisbech Gild which continued its good work even after its demise. For when it was suppressed at the Reformation, Bishop Goodrich managed to secure the estates, which had risen to a considerable value, for charitable purposes. They were handed over to the principal inhabitants who were vested with the full control, and used them to support a free school to educate the youth, to preach the Word of God, and to relieve the poor. Apparently they also used part of the funds to found the chapel at Murrow referred to earlier in this chapter.

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The number of Gilds continued to increase up to the time of the Reformation, and in the sixteenth century especially far greater prominence was given to the relief of the poor, and even supplying them with food. It is estimated that before their dissolution there were, apart from the larger towns of Cambridge, Ely, Wisbech, and Whittlesea, as many as 214 in the county, divided among 158 parishes, there being no sign of any in thirty-six parishes. The smaller numbers given above refer only to those whose certificates are extant.

In these various ways a considerable number of priests found occupation, even if it were only part time. For the rest they had to eke out a precarious existence as best they could, and some of them must have found it a very difficult business.

CHAPTER V

THE CHURCH AND THE CHURCHES

EVERY village church has its own story to tell, and even the unlearned, with the most fragmentary knowledge of architecture, can see for himself that it is a patchwork of all the recognized styles from the Middle Ages. A descriptive account will show that it has an Early English chancel, a decorated tower, perpendicular nave and aisles, with perhaps a part of a Norman arch lurking. And yet the whole is complete and magnificent, an organism that has grown, rather than a collection of parts.

It may be assumed that in practically every case the existing structure is a successor of an original dating back to Saxon times, but the reticence of Domesday in this county makes absolute proof generally impossible. We have seen how thanes made it a matter of pride and prestige to build a church for their estates, but these were later removed to make room for something more elaborate. Apart from small and often questionable remains, there are few Saxon churches left in the country, and particularly so in this district, where there is no stone available for building, and such material would have to be floated along the waterways from the quarries of Northamptonshire. There was, however, an abundance of timber in the great forest on the borders of the fens.

The exception proves the rule, and the one church that is commonly taken to be a Saxon survivor, St. Benet's in Cambridge, is solidly built of stone. St. Giles also contains an arch put together from the materials of a pre-Norman chancel arch. A few village churches besides have fragments believed to be Saxon.

The Norman Conquest introduced a wave of church building, and in the course of the next two or three centuries every single church seems to have been entirely rebuilt. The neighbourhood is not so rich in actual Norman work as some other parts of England, possibly because the countryside was too exhausted by the prolonged struggle of the Hereward rebellion. And those churches that were built in this period were later altered beyond recognition. The nave was pulled down and raised, aisles and chapels were added, the chancel reconstructed, and so forth. The outline story of any particular church is not difficult to discover.

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A curious feature is the duplication of churches in the same village in a number of cases. Swaffham Prior has actually two standing in the same churchyard, as had formerly Fulbourn and Histon. Long Stanton has two some half mile apart, and Childerley is composed of two villages, Childerley Magna and Parva, which were united in the fifteenth century, when one of the churches was pulled down by Sir John Cutts to make room for a deer park.

The explanation is not far to seek, and Domesday gives us the required information, despite its silence about actual churches. When William deprived the Saxon holders of their estates, and gave them to his own followers, there was a certain Alan de Zouches, Earl of Brittany, who took over no fewer than sixty-nine estates, sixty-one of which had previously belonged to a Saxon lady of the name of Rose. In Swaffham there were three manors, the largest of which went to Earl Alan, another to Walter Gifard, and the third to Harduin de Scales. Similarly in Long Stanton there were two, one of which again fell to Earl Alan, and the other to Picot, the Norman sheriff.

It is clear, then, what happened. The lady Rose and her compeers had built churches for their tenants, regardless of the fact that there might be another church near at hand. The neighbourhood was not mapped out geographically for church purposes, but all peasants were bound to their manor for this as for land tenure, and, if it happened that two churches arose next door to each other, well and good. This was just an accident.

So at Histon, there were the manors of St. Andrew and St. Etheldreda. The former was held by Henry de Colville under the Bishop of Lincoln, and was commonly known as 'Colville's', and it remained in the family till 1391 when the advowson of the church was made over to the abbess and convent of Denny.

The story is given more at length in Chapter XI.

At Fulbourn one of the manors again was given to Earl Alan, including the parish of All Saints', while St. Vigor's belonged to various families, and finally in 1388 came to the Colvilles. It stands now as the parish church, as All Saints' collapsed in the eighteenth century and had to be removed entirely.

The zeal for church building and enlargement continued unabated for the best part of four centuries, rising to a peak, perhaps, in the fourteenth. It is recorded that in the year 1350 alone Bishop

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de Lisle dedicated no fewer than ten, not all of which may have been new. This is somewhat strange, as it comes immediately after the year of the Black Death, when it might have been expected that all such work would be suspended. It is possible, of course, that the churches were ready before the tragedy, which postponed their dedication, especially in view of the fact, which will be noted in a later chapter, that during the Plague the bishop was safely away on the continent.

The motive for the work is clear enough in the early Norman days, when the existing churches were mostly wooden structures, or otherwise unsatisfactory or inadequate. But why the same should happen two and three hundred years later is less easy to understand. It cannot be put down, except to a very minor degree, to increasing population, even if, as we have seen, that did grow by a large percentage in these centuries.

To-day, if a new church is to be built, the first question is an estimate of required seating accommodation, but that can hardly have been so in those days, as there is little or no relation between the size of the village and that of the church. In fact at first there were no seats provided, and the architectural beauty of our magnificent village churches was unspoiled by the disfigurement of pews or chairs. There are, it is true, a number of choir stalls of medieval date, of which perhaps the oldest are those at Balsham, which date from early in the fifteenth century. And old benches are not uncommon, but it was not till towards the end of that century that they became at all usual.

But when a church was enlarged, or pulled down altogether to be replaced by a more spacious one, the object was rather the 'greater glory of God', and incidentally of the patron, and the dimensions would be determined by the means at the founder's disposal, though possibly not excluding altogether the size and importance of the village. Thus Linton had in 1337 an estimated population of five hundred. The seating capacity of the church, erected about 1400 (the same church now as then) is given as four hundred. But it was one of the most prosperous villages in medieval times, with a market that was first held in 1246, so that the estate owner could erect a church large enough to contain well nigh every man, woman and child. Fulbourn had some four hundred and twenty people at the same date, yet it had two churches, of which the surviving one is said to hold six hundred to-day.

An interesting suggestion to account for the frequent rebuilding and heightening of the nave has been made by Mr. Munro Cautley in his fascinating book on the churches of Suffolk. He ascribes it in part to the fact that the cult of the rood rose to an extraordinary pitch in the fifteenth century.

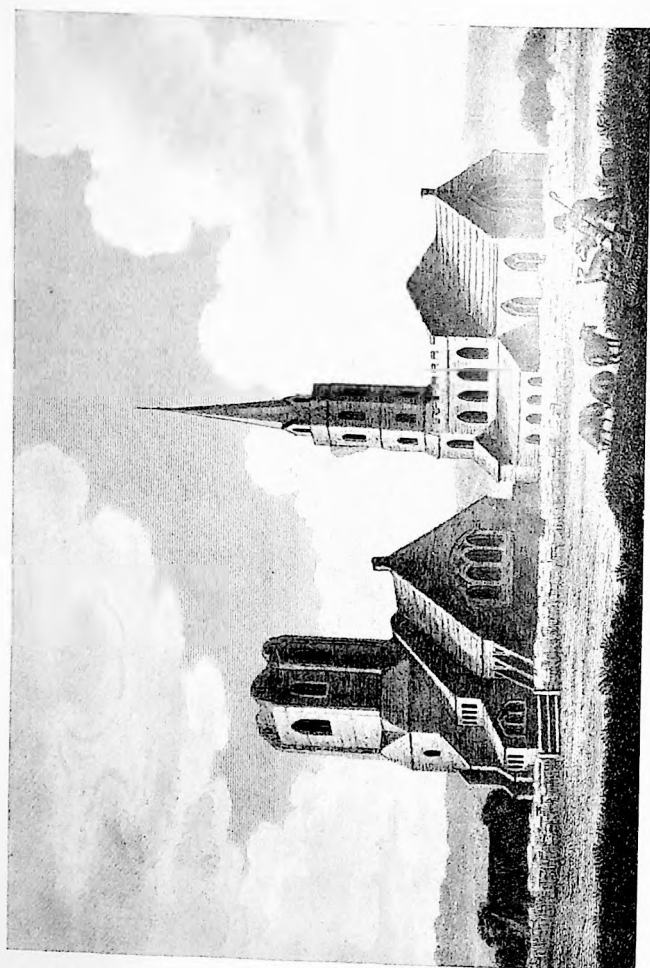
The rood consisted of a carved group showing three figures — our Lord on the Cross, the Blessed Virgin and St. John. This group was placed above the chancel screen, and became more elaborated as time went on. A loft was introduced over the screen to hold the rood, and that again was widened till it could hold an altar in the front. Gradually this became an object of veneration vying even with the principal altar of the church, and concurrently the proportions of the figures were increased, till they were cramped under the overhanging roof; and moreover, canopies of honour were raised over them. In consequence, the roof had to be raised, and that involved the enlargement of the whole nave.

The result was that the existing nave could no longer suffice, and the remedy was to pull it down and build it higher. This seems a drastic procedure to us, but it agrees with, and supports, the contention that the primary object of church building was not utilitarian but the glory of God, and we might well wish that the mantle of our forebears might fall upon ourselves.

Rood screens in plenty survive in the county in whole or in part, and in many churches there are signs of the staircase that used to lead up to them. But the roods themselves were an obvious target for the iconoclasts of the Reformation, and met their fate accordingly.

The external appearance of the churches, allowing for minor restorations, was identical then with what we see to-day, but on entering the first impression was very different. A 'dim religious light' well describes it, with full emphasis on each of the three words. There was also a wealth of colour, in marked contrast to the chaste sobriety on which we now pride ourselves. To begin with, there were the windows, most of which were glazed in colours with glass which, even if it only remains in fragments, is to us priceless, and stands in glorious contrast to the hideous productions from the nineteenth century that disfigure so many of our country churches to-day.

The walls, also, were covered with paintings, depicting saints and angels, with grim representations of the Resurrection, the weighing of souls, and other fantastic ideas. Of these there are



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many survivals in portions, perhaps the best being in Chippenham, where the work is as old as the fourteenth century. But practically every church has some tinge of colouring here and there which suggests what once was the rule.

Images abounded in surprising profusion, and shrines were frequent. Then, fluttering before altar or shrine, thrown into relief by the general dimness, were altar lights and obit lamps, and most prominent because of its position the light on the rood. These little sparks, continually burning, carried on in permanence the act of worship.

The rood screen was there, and very likely as well the parclose or screen shutting off the chantry chapel, between them making the church appear smaller and more enclosed than it really is. On the other hand, the nave was free and open, unspoiled by any array of pews or chairs, which, however useful they may be, serve to obscure the architectural perfection of the building. The floors were strewn with rushes, cleaned out and renewed three times a year, on which worshippers would stand or squat. Certainly this did not induce to cleanliness, and the item of rat and mouse traps in church accounts is horribly suggestive. Stalls there might be in the chancel for the clergy and their attendants, and many churches still have benches that date back to the medieval times, but they did not become common till the close of the fifteenth century. The only seating that was likely to be provided was a stone bench running round the walls, for the aged and sick to rest on. Hence comes the familiar saying: 'the weak go to the wall', which has a slightly contemptuous sound to our ears, but originally it bore its exact and literal meaning. Such benches survive in the churches at Over and Sutton.

This general description is borne out by some old pictures of churches which show the congregation squatting on the floor, presumably during the sermon.

A feature that we should miss, one that was never catered for in these older churches of ours, and which has now to be squeezed into chapels or corners never intended for it, is the organ. It is the more noteworthy that in the Precentor's Rolls for the year 1329 particulars are given of the cost of erecting a new organ in Ely Cathedral. This is said to be the earliest such record that survives, though Ely itself had an organ before, and we have seen that centuries earlier there was an elementary instrument at Ramsey.

Every church would be provided then, as now, with the requisites for service. An inventory from Linton, dated about 1300, gives first the list of books belonging to the church. These were seven in number — 1, the Missal, or Mass book; 2, the Psalter; 3, the Legend, or book of Lessons; 4, the Grail, containing the Creed and the Agnus Dei; 5, the Antiphonary, with the parts of the Service that were chanted antiphonally, verse and verse about; 6, a Martyrology; and 7, the Ordinal.¹

Then there were the vestments, a complete set of which included three surplices and a rochet. Of these sets Linton had three. On the High Altar were two large candles perpetually burning, and in front of it hung a valuable pyx of ivory or silver.

A very similar inventory is found at Comberton at the same date. It includes four sets of vestments, an ivory pyx, a good chrisatorium and two rochets. The church was appropriated to Barnwell Priory, which put in a vicar. It was taxed at 12 marks, and paid for Synods 2s. 4d., for Visitations 18d., and for St. Peter's pence 2s.

Linton may be taken as typical of all village churches at the time, though perhaps it was more richly furnished than some, as it was a flourishing little town. Its history is also typical, and well illustrates various points referred to here and there in these chapters. It is fortunate in having such a historian as the late Dr. Palmer, whose knowledge of village churches in general, and of his own at Linton in particular, is unrivalled.

Before the Conquest the parishes of Great and Little Linton and Barham all belonged to one thane, and probably shared a single church. This would be built in true Saxon style of logs of oak, standing on end, side by side.

After the Conquest the estates fell to the Earl of Richmond, who built a new church of clunch and rubble about the year 1100. The priest, drawing the full tithes, would be a man of substance, and, no doubt aided by his flock, some time early in the twelfth century built another church at Barham. This would consist of a chancel with rounded end, a nave with a south aisle, and perhaps a short tower.

But in the last quarter of the century the tithes of Great and Little Linton were alienated to an abbey in Brittany, and thenceforward the living was held by a French monk, with the title of Prior, as at Swavesey.

¹ Dr. W. M. Palmer, *History of Linton*.

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The manors were now under different lords, and each would want his own church, so that by 1300, and perhaps earlier, there were three places of worship, the mother church of St. Mary at Great Linton, the chapel of St. James at Little Linton, and St. Margaret at Barham. About this same year St. Mary's was largely rebuilt, for the population of Great Linton had trebled in the two centuries, while Barham had doubled, and Little Linton remained stationary.

The church at Barham was subsequently given to the Crutched Friars, and so remained through the medieval period. But it and the chapel at Little Linton long ago disappeared entirely.

It has been held that the church as we know it, with the main division into chancel and nave, is directly descended from the ancient manor house with its court attached. The parish church in Saxon times certainly belonged to the lord of the manor, and was usually built by him, so that the chancel would represent his private abode, and the nave the court of the common people. Accordingly later on, when the rector superseded the lord, the chancel remained as his peculiar property, and he was personally responsible for its upkeep.

So the parson and the community became the joint owners, the community having as its share the nave, the aisles, and the tower. At Graveley accordingly, in 1275, the community obtained an order at the Fair of St. Ives that a mason should pull down the whole of the wall between the church and the chancel as far as the stone arch, and rebuild in a more suitable manner. This is an extreme case of the division between the two parts of the building, but it does not seem to have been regarded as altogether abnormal. In fact, in churches appropriated by monasteries the chancel was sometimes shut off by a dead wall. In such cases the monastery can only have acquired what previously belonged to the lord of the manor, the community retaining its rights. And this must have been the situation at Graveley.

At Littleport in the fourteenth century the repairs of the church were carried out at the joint expense of the lord and the parishioners. We shall see that in Cambridge a new church might be built by the burgesses themselves, showing another stage in the evolution.

This descent of the church from the manor house, if correct, may well account for the many secular uses to which churches were

put for many centuries, long after the origin had been forgotten, such as, for instance, the trading mentioned above.¹

In 1278 the rector of Cherry Hinton held a View of Frankpledge in the church, and exacted fines on bread and ale. The word Frankpledge denoted an association for mutual security, membership of which involved a kind of perpetual bail of each for all and all for each.

Earlier still — we can recognize this from many incidents in the Old Testament — the responsibility for any crime committed fell on all members of the clan; it rested, that is to say, on kinship.

This gave place to the custom by which the clan was replaced by members of the district, or the community. We shall see an instance of this later in the chapter in connection with the right of sanctuary.

Frankpledge was the technical term denoting this position of affairs, and the View of Frankpledge was a court held by the sheriffs for the purpose of ascertaining whether the law was complied with, and was normally held either once or twice a year. In some cases, instead of the sheriffs, the lord of the manor or of the hundred held his own court, and this was the usual proceeding by the end of the thirteenth century, by which time the ceremony was known as the Court Leet.

Here, at Cherry Hinton, we have an instance of this court being held by the rector of the parish, and the natural place to hold it was his own church.

It will be remembered that in Bishop Langham's charge, detailed in Chapter IV, there appear references to trading in churches, and to unseemly uses of the churchyard.

In Cambridge Great St. Mary's was used for certain official functions of the University, other than what we should regard as religious. In particular the annual 'Commencement' was held in the church, with a stage erected at the west end for the Vice-Chancellor and doctors.

As late as the reign of Charles I the churchwardens of Swavesey are found refusing to allow the church or yard to be profaned by plays, church ales, leets, coroners' inquests, wrestling and dancing. This is revealed in the answers to the Visitation questionnaire of Bishop Wren.

Another question was whether dogs were allowed in church.

¹ Page 51.

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And to this St. Andrew's, Cambridge, had to plead guilty. They were not introduced, it need hardly be said, for any form of sport, but the deduction is that the reverent attitude towards the sacred buildings only gradually evolved, and their accepted use for secular purposes carried with it a carelessness about their sanctity that is strange to us to-day.

A recognized use for churches, far removed from the usual one of worship, was that of sanctuary for criminals. According to the letter of the law, a man might remain there in safety for 40 days, though of the 154 cases reported in the county, none actually stayed for more than 14. The procedure was that as soon as it was known that someone had fled for sanctuary, the coroner was informed, and he arrived within a few days. Unless the man was proved not guilty, a phenomenon which was probably unknown, he then gave the culprit the choice of surrendering to the course of law or abjuring the country. Of these 154, 100 abjured, 2 escaped, and the fate of the others is not stated. It may well be imagined that they also abjured, for neither the law nor its consequences were regarded with favour, witness the fact that a certain man who was in danger of imprisonment for debt fled to the church at Stow Quay, and confessed to a murder he had never committed, rather than face internment in Ely gaol.

The criminal, having abjured, was then given a certain port from which he was to sail, and a stated number of days to get there, which might necessitate his travelling twenty to thirty miles a day. He left the church ungirt, bareheaded, unshod, in his bare shirt, as if he were going to be hanged on the gallows, and carrying a cross in his hands. He might indeed clothe himself more adequately once he had started, but he was not allowed to turn aside from the straight road, under penalty of being apprehended.

This right of sanctuary was guarded as a valued privilege of the Church. On one occasion two men who were imprisoned in Cambridge gaol for felony escaped and fled to St. Giles, whereupon the Undersheriff took them by force and returned them to gaol. The Bishop of Ely complained of prejudice and injury to the liberty of the Church, and appealed to the king, who ordered the men to be restored to their sanctuary.

On the other hand, if any succeeded in escaping from sanctuary, the town was held responsible and punished by a fine. This happened in Long Stanton when a stranger had broken into the home

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close to the parson, and done some damage. He took refuge in the church, and then managed to elude the vigilance of the guards and vanished. Long Stanton had to pay the penalty.

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The 154 cases referred to are spread over the majority of the villages in the county, showing that the right pertained to all parish churches, though it was not extended to subordinate chapels. Apart from the case of violation mentioned above, only two others occur, one at Foxton, and the other at Linton, and in each case the village was held to account.

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Kingsley's account of those terrible months is most vivid, and his book is well worth reading. We may again discount as much as we will for the sake of pedantic accuracy, but he did derive the outline of the campaign from the authentic chronicles of the time. He tells how the Danes, maddened by their failure to enrich themselves by plunder, heard of the fame of wealthy monasteries, and thought at last that they had an easy prey. Hereward with difficulty turned them aside from his beloved Crowland, but at the expense of promising them all they wanted in Peterborough.

Warned of their approach, the monks hastily removed as much as they could of their treasures, but it was little they could do. The Danes swarmed into the city, pillaging and burning, till the whole place was a great conflagration. The monastery, too, was burned, but the abbey escaped.¹ Not so its riches. 'Hereward ran into the cathedral. It was a hideous sight; torn books and vestments; broken tabernacle-work; foul savages swarming in and out of every dark aisle and cloister, like wolves in search of prey; five or six ruffians aloft upon the rood-screen; one tearing the golden crown from the head of the crucifix, another the golden footstool from its feet.'

The old writers relate how the vengeance of heaven pursued the desecrators, for on their return to Denmark they were overtaken by a fierce storm, which wrecked their boats on the coasts of Ireland or Norway, and but few returned home. Such spoils as they managed to land in their own country were deposited in a church, which shortly afterwards was destroyed by fire.

Meantime, William had appointed one of his Normans, Turolf, Abbot of Malmesbury, to the abbacy of Peterborough. But when he arrived with an armed force to take possession, he found the place as the Danes had left it, and all the monks fled. These, however, returned within a few days, and the services were resumed.

Hereward then repaired to Ely, where he was welcomed by the abbot as a defender, and he and his men were treated as guests. Here the rebellion was at last crushed by William himself, who forced his way into the Isle by building his famous causeway at Aldreth. Abbot Thurstan and his monks made their submission, but had to pay heavily for the part they had played, being forced to part with much of the rich treasure of the abbey to liquidate the fine imposed upon them. It is small wonder that Ely became

¹ It was not till 1541 that the abbey was technically converted into a cathedral.

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obnoxious to the king, and that he welcomed proposals by which the power of the abbot could be curbed.

William's policy was to import large numbers of ecclesiastics from across the Channel, so that he might have the official support, instead of the resentment, of the leaders of the Church. Beginning with bishops, he deposed some, and waited for others to die, in order to fill their places with his own nominees. Cambridgeshire was at this time still in the huge diocese that extended from the Humber to the Thames, with its official headquarters at Dorchester. The bishop conveniently died a year after the Conquest, and was duly replaced by a foreigner, one Remigius from Fécamp in Normandy. It was he who moved his seat from Dorchester to Lincoln, so forming the famous diocese of that name.

The abbey of Ely, like many others, remained a stronghold of political conservatism, and was also very jealous of episcopal domination, from which many abbeys had from their foundation been made exempt by papal decree. But no change was made in its status during the reign of the Conqueror.

A generation later, in the reign of Henry I, when Archbishop Anselm had plans for increasing the episcopate, he met with every encouragement from the king to carve out the diocese of Ely from the vast one of Lincoln, and Ely became a cathedral city in the year 1107. The king was now able to place a bishop there who, he hoped, would be his loyal supporter and be on the spot to control the vagaries of the rival monks.

Moreover the abbey, which at this time was one of the wealthiest in England, was forced to surrender a large slice of its revenues to endow the bishopric. And, in addition, the bishop was confirmed in the extraordinary temporal powers over the Isle, making him practically supreme in secular as well as religious matters, a position that was paralleled among bishops only at Durham. Consequently men were chosen for the post whose previous training qualified them to act as statesmen as much as churchmen, and the bishops of Ely long continued the tradition of being foremost among the royal counsellors, keeping up corresponding retinue and magnificence, while paying but slight attention to the spiritual needs of the diocese.

This is how the change came about. In process of time, in the year 1106, to be exact, Abbot Robert died, the last independent abbot of Ely, as it proved. About the same time, away in Wales,

Bishop Hervey, a Breton, had been having a stormy time with the natives of that country. He did not understand them, and they did not understand him, and when he introduced the military to reduce them to his allegiance there was an outbreak. To ease the situation there, and to fill the gap at Ely till another abbot should be appointed, King Henry transferred Hervey. The latter, on arrival at Ely, found that his predecessor had made schemes for raising his position to that of a bishop. The idea appealed to Hervey's ambition, and he set to work to curry favour with the monks, so as to have their backing. Having secured that, he applied to the king, who was glad enough to seize the opportunity to assert himself, through a trusted agent, against the disaffected monks. And the archbishop on his part was able to carry through his scheme of dividing the cumbersome diocese of Lincoln.

But the Bishop of Lincoln had something to say to the proposal, as he stood to lose both authority and revenue. He was won over by a bargain that gave him ample compensation.

There remained the Pope. Negotiations with him were somewhat protracted, as the suggestion was that the cathedral should be administered, not by Dean and Canons, but by Prior and Monks, the bishop retaining the title of Abbot. Such an arrangement was unknown on the Continent, but was not at all uncommon in England, as Canterbury, Winchester, Durham and several others were similarly governed.

All was at last settled, and by the end of 1109 Hervey was duly installed as the first Abbot-Bishop of Ely. But he continued to be very much more the courtier and State official than a mere diocesan, drawing the while a substantial part of the monastic revenues for himself and successors. With the approval of the king he drew up a charter, assigning to the monks what was left over, carefully naming the estates on which they could still reckon.

Out of these he earmarked certain lands and rectories for particular officials of the monastery. Thus the Sacrist, who was responsible for the books, vestments, plate and so on, was given the income from St. Mary's, Ely, St. Andrew's, Cambridge, and Wentworth, besides a sheaf of corn from every acre in the bishop's demesnes towards tapers and candles.

The Chamberlain, to provide beds and bedding for the monks, had the rectories of Hauxton and Witcham; the Almoner, lands in Ely and Stretham, and the rectory of Foxton; the Precentor had

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Whittlesey, Impington and some portion of Pampisford. And lastly, the 'Hostiliarius', whose duty was to provide hospitality for all comers, did so from Witchford, Meldreth and Sutton.

The last named village, Sutton, had the almost unique experience of remaining in the possession of the same corporate body for nearly nine hundred years. The manor, rectory and advowson were included in the endowment granted to Etheldreda. They were not alienated in the disturbed times of the Danes, and now, as we see, the estate was among those assigned to the Prior and Convent, while many were appropriated to the Bishop. Not until 1541 were they transferred to the Dean and Chapter, who hold the gift of the living to this day..—

On Hervey's death in 1131 the diocese was vacant for some two years, during which time the Crown had the advantage of the large revenues, so that the king was in no hurry to appoint a successor. The man who was ultimately chosen was Bishop Nigel, who put Ely into a state of military defence, handed over the care of his flock to Ranulph, a secular priest, and devoted himself entirely to politics and to his support of Matilda in her protracted struggles. He resided in London, and any visits he paid to Ely were, it may be presumed, in order to keep a watchful eye on his estates.

He did indeed have one exciting visit there, when the king had quarrelled with him and other bishops. Nigel, under great provocation it must be admitted, took up arms against Stephen, and fled to the Isle of Ely with its inaccessible marshes and ditches, which were so used not for the first or the last time. But Stephen, like William before him, overcame the natural obstacles, and Nigel had to flee elsewhere. This meant, of course, the temporary loss of his see.

He regained it a little later, and continued in possession altogether for thirty-six years, but not without further disturbance. For late in his life he ran foul of the Convent, and a violent quarrel ensued between him and the prior, in which the Pope intervened on the side of the prior.

William Longchamp (1189-91), a Norman of humble extraction, was Chancellor to Richard I, and his trusted henchman in his stormy career. As a bishop he is remembered chiefly for his great unpopularity as a foreigner who would not trouble to learn the English language, and who openly showed his contempt for everything English.

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Eustace, who followed him (1197-1215), proved far from amenable to his king's wishes, for he was one of the bishops who published the excommunication of King John by the Pope, and also the interdict on the country. He left his mark on Ely, however, by the erection of the famous Galilee Porch.

It will be seen that such men belong rather to English history than to the growth of Christianity in the fens. But as the thirteenth century advanced, the bishops, while retaining their functions at court, gradually came to show more interest and zeal in what appears to us to be their primary object. Some of them will appear in the course of our narrative.

Just as William set himself to strengthen and reorganize the hierarchy of the English Church, so did he with the monasteries. The revival brought about by Edgar and Dunstan was lamentably short-lived, and reform was sorely needed. The task was not this time to drive out those who had no business in monasteries at all, but to recall the whole Order to a sense of its duties and to a high standard of life. To effect this he imported men from Normandy to be abbots and priors, as he had others to be bishops. And at the same time all monasteries were brought finally under the Rule of St. Benedict.

This rule consists of a lengthy document drawn up by St. Benedict himself in the sixth century, setting forth the duties of abbots, the chief monastic virtues, and the regulations for the celebration of the canonical office, which Benedict regards as the monk's first duty 'of which nothing is to take precedence'. He did not magnify asceticism for its own sake, but prescribed the routine which is to be undeviatingly followed.

In Anglo-Saxon times monasteries in this country had not been uniform in the rules they had adopted, and to some extent each was a law unto itself. But from this time onwards all were called upon to obey the one rule.

The popularity and piety of the monks quickly eclipsed the secular clergy. It became the fashion for Norman nobles who had received grants of land to put up monasteries on them, just as their Saxon predecessors had built parish churches, or to foster those already existing by endowing them liberally with rectories or other sources of revenue. As a result nearly half the parishes were stripped of the best part of their endowments to enrich the monasteries. Moreover, while the secular clergy were under the jurisdic-

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tion of the bishop, many of the Regulars were exempt, and were not slow to assert their independence. Thus the monks were for long a sharp thorn in the side of the secular clergy.

Few Benedictine houses were founded after the Conquest. The existing ones at the time were the five great houses of Ely, Thorney, Peterborough, Crowland and Ramsey, and at least two convents or nunneries, at Chatteris and Eltisley. The former was founded about the year 1000, and in the reign of Henry I was subordinated to Ely. The latter was moved in early Norman days to Hinchinbrooke.

In the course of the twelfth century four more appeared. The Convent of St. Radegund in Cambridge dates from 1133, and lasted for three and a half centuries, after which it was dissolved to make room for Jesus College.

At Waterbeach there was the Priory of Denny, which passed through various vicissitudes in the course of its history. It was founded in 1160 as a cell, or dependency, of Ely, but was afterwards acquired by the Knights Templar, who threw out the monks. On the collapse of their Order in 1293 the Lady Dionisia converted it into a house of the Minorite nuns, a branch of the Franciscans. Half a century later it was re-started by the Countess of Pembroke, foundress of Pembroke College, for nuns of the Order of St. Clare, and so it remained till the final dissolution under Henry VIII.

Two other nunneries were opened, at Ickleton and Swaffham Bulbeck.

For the most part these institutions were small and poor.¹ Denny was one of the larger ones, with from twenty to thirty inmates. The nuns were largely unmarried daughters of aristocratic families, or girls who could not otherwise be disposed of, illegitimate or deformed. The age of profession was sixteen, but novices were admitted earlier.

Like the monasteries, they were given grants of fairs and markets, from which they drew the rents of booths and entrance tolls. They had also their own stalls for the sale of spices and such-like commodities. St. Radegund was granted the 'Garlic Fair' by King Stephen, which was held in the churchyard in August, but they do not seem to have made any considerable profit from it.

The convent was kept in food by the home farm, supplemented by purchase from without. The senior ladies enjoyed a day out on

¹ What follows is taken from Eileen Power's *Mediaeval Monasteries*.

occasion to replenish the larder — that was the excuse — when they floated down to Lynn by boat, and brought back huge stocks of herrings and whatever else they could find. Dame Joan Lancaster had a good reputation for her bargaining powers with the rough tribes of Lynn.

Clothing was accounted for by the earmarked proceeds of appropriated churches, for instance five marks from St. Clement's.

By way of relieving the monotony of their existence, nuns tried to keep pets, but this the bishops were constantly forbidding, as being detrimental to the rigour demanded of them. At Chatteris and Ickleton in 1345 they were forbidden to keep fowls, dogs or small birds within the precincts, or to bring them into church during divine service.

Even by the end of the twelfth century the rot was once more setting in. Monasteries became notorious for their luxury and low conversation; the monks were said to have the manners of players and jesters. They were concerned chiefly with their material comforts and the maintenance of their rights against all and sundry. Their official records that have come down to us are very suggestive. They are made up largely of records of disputes in connection with their property, which kept their legal members busy, or with their efforts to maintain their independence against all comers, whether bishop, archdeacon, rectors of parishes or rival bodies similar to their own.

Occasionally they came into conflict with the king himself. Thus in 1257, when the bishopric was vacant, the monks of Ely duly elected their sub-prior, a proper and irreproachable man, to the office. The king thereat was highly incensed, and, says Matthew Paris, 'gave the charge of that church to John Wakeman, which was like entrusting a lamb to a famishing wolf. He at once felled their woods, impoverished their dependents, and injured the monks themselves to such a degree that all reverence for the Saints was laid aside, and the church reduced to the most abject state of slavery'.

However, a compromise was arrived at, by which a third person altogether was finally selected in the person of Hugh of Balsham, a notable man in the history of the University.

One other item of some characteristic interest may be mentioned. In the Cellarer's Roll for Ely in 1274, eight pages, in all some ten feet long, are devoted to setting down with extraordinary

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minuteness the weekly bills for a whole year of all that was prepared in the kitchen or consumed in the refectory of the monastery. Particulars of every article of food provided appear, with the rise and fall of the cost of butter, milk and eggs at different seasons. They indicate the rigour with which fast days, especially Lent, were observed.

We have so far spoken of two types of ecclesiastics: the Regulars and the Seculars. The word 'Secular', of course, has none of the semi-derogatory import which it now has when applied to Church affairs, nor does it imply any hard distinction between the Church and the world, as though the latter were irreligious. It denoted those clergy whose life was spent in the outer world, living in their own private houses, and working in parishes or elsewhere.

The word 'Regular' means simply one who lives according to a specified rule, like the monks. A monk is one who has taken vows binding him to a life of devotion in an institution, where he is one of a community, isolated from the outer world, supported by a common purse, among brethren whose primary object is the salvation of their own souls. They did indeed, especially in the early times, go out far and wide, carrying on the work of evangelization, and ministering to congregations in scattered parishes. But from Norman times a monk was forbidden to be the incumbent of a living, except for very special reasons. He was not necessarily in priest's orders at all. In fact, to begin with, the majority were laymen, though clergy also were attracted by this mode of life, and some were needed at all times to conduct the services, and especially the Mass, in the monasteries.

Moreover, women were exactly on the same footing as men, and we have seen how nunneries grew up as much as monasteries, and how even in some cases men and women were found in the same House.

Both men and women would doubtless form a strong centre of the Church, with influence spreading far beyond their walls, especially in looking after the sick and poor, and also conducting schools. But this outside work was, so to speak, accidental, the true calling being pursued within the monastery.

The term 'monastery' has also been loosely applied to other corporate bodies, which resembled monks in living in a common house and being subject to vows. But in other ways their manner of life and sphere of work were widely different.

First, there were Canons Regular. The same word Regular implies that they were subject to a rule, and the word Canon has originally much the same meaning, though it is taken from Greek and not from Latin. 'As many as live according to this *Canon* . . .' says St. Paul. This sense is preserved in our own phrase 'Canon Law', which is the collected rule of the Church.

It came to be applied to the 'canonical' services which the brethren were called upon to attend daily, and so to the men themselves who were members of the community. That again is preserved in our familiar institution of Cathedral canons, though there the term has lost its original significance, and become a title of honour.

The grand distinction between these canons and the monks was that their work was essentially outside; they were priests, and served churches belonging to their priory, or assisted in others, besides going on preaching missions. We do not, accordingly, hear of women in this order, as we do of Benedictine nuns.

The most famous of them in the county was the Augustinian House founded in connection with St. Giles' Church, and soon afterwards removed across the river to Barnwell, of which we shall hear more in Chapter VII. Subordinate branches of this were founded at Upwell and Lode, the latter being well known as Anglesey Priory, which became a cell of Ely in the middle of the fifteenth century.

Very different from the preceding, yet with the same external resemblance in that they occupied religious houses, were the Knights of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, known briefly as Knights Hospitallers, or, in the second stage of their history, Knights of Rhodes, or of Malta, from the islands where they made their headquarters when Jerusalem was no longer available. They came into being with the Crusades, and were an aristocratic foundation, ranking, as the name implies, among the knights of chivalry. They admitted also enough priests into their order to perform the functions of chaplains, and men of lower ranks as inferior members to do the more menial duties.

At the outset they were a preponderatingly nursing brotherhood, attracting able physicians and surgeons to join them, and actually founding hospitals wherever they went. Afterwards the military side became predominant, though they did not neglect their original object. The modern society which bears their name and works in

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close co-operation with the Red Cross is a direct lineal descendant from the Knights.

A considerable number of their hospitals sprang up in the county, usually following the Augustinian rule. There were no fewer than four in Cambridge, two at Ely and at Wisbech, and one each at Fordham, Leverington, Longstowe, Thorney, Whittlesford, Whittlesea and Wicken, besides two others, at Chippenham and Wilbraham, which were taken over from the Templars on the dissolution of the latter.

Somewhat akin to these were the Knights Templar, but these were definitely military in origin and object, being concerned first to assist the numerous pilgrims on their hazardous journey to Jerusalem, and then to foster the Crusades. But their career was short. They early fell into disfavour, and in the first years of the fourteenth century they were formally disbanded by the Pope after lasting for only two hundred years. Strictly military though they were, there was still a religious basis to the order; they had their chaplains, and the knights were expected to attend divine service daily. In this county they were to be found at Chippenham, Denny and Wilbraham.

Finally, there were the Friars. They originated with St. Francis of Assisi, who sent out his mendicant preachers, carrying neither staff nor scrip, and taking no money in their purses. They were vowed to poverty, and devoted to preaching the Word, and to the service of the poor, the sick, and the lepers. They were a brotherhood rather than an order, as they had no noviciate or grades, and no organization. The world was their parish, and their mission was to the squalid and the wretched.

They first arrived in England in 1224, and within a very short time had formed settlements in many of the great towns, including Cambridge, where they had as many as seven houses. They came like a breath, or perhaps a blast, of fresh air, blowing out the cobwebs of conservatism from monks and clergy alike. They had indeed their houses as their centres, but no rules or regulations to keep them there. Up and down they roamed, with an evangelistic fervour worthy of the apostolic age, living the while on the meanest fare and clothed in the coarsest raiment.

Other orders of friars followed the Franciscans, some of them known popularly by the prevailing colour of their habit. The Franciscans themselves were the Grey Friars; then there were

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the Dominicans — 'Domini Canes', the Lord's Watchdogs — the Black Friars; the Carmelites, the White Friars; these with the Austin Friars formed the four principal mendicant orders.

In addition to the friaries in Cambridge, they founded a few others in the county; one, half a century later, at Linton, then a flourishing market town, and one for Franciscan nuns at Denny, inherited by them from the Knights Templar.

It will be easily understood that they were not long in stirring up trouble with the more conservative branches of the Church, the monks and parish clergy; the more so as their evangelism was no mere fanatic outburst, but was the superstructure built on a foundation of study and scholarship, which made Cambridge a peculiarly congenial home for them. We read how Minorites forced their way into monasteries under pretence of sickness, and there they stayed. They made their way into the church, where they celebrated Mass, and received the confession of parishioners and even of the priests themselves. It came to an open trial of strength between the new and the old orders, while the parish priest also found his authority contemned, his sphere invaded and his life decried. And the position was made more difficult by the fact that the friars were subject to no authority whatever except that of the Pope.

But this intensity of fervour could not be maintained, and in less than a generation signs of degeneracy were showing themselves. Popularity gave place to criticism, as genuine unworldliness became infected by pretence.

Enough has been said to show that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the town and county of Cambridge swarmed with religious houses. The lists given do not claim in any way to be exhaustive, but rather indicative. When the monasteries were finally dissolved at the Reformation, the total number appearing in official lists for this county is only thirty-five, but many must have fallen out by the way as monasticism in all its forms waned. Of those that survived to the end the majority had the barest minimum of inmates.

CHAPTER VII

CAMBRIDGE, TOWN AND UNIVERSITY

THE importance of Cambridge in its dual capacity of county town and the seat of the University is so obvious that, at the risk of some irrelevance, it calls for a special chapter in any local history of the Church.

Its origin goes back into dim obscurity, and has been the subject of much controversy. Into the details of that it is not necessary to enter, but we may confine ourselves to the broad outline which has emerged.

The earliest settlement seems to have come into existence because of its position at the junction of two very ancient roads or tracks, which passed between the thick forest land to the south and the waste fenland to the north; while at the same time it served as an inland port on the navigable river.

There was a Roman settlement in the neighbourhood, called Camboritum, but almost certainly this was quite a different place, and the traditional association is due to the coincidence of the first syllable of the name. It was not for several centuries that the name Cambridge first appeared.

We may question the accuracy in detail of the story of the mission of the monks from Ely to find a suitable coffin for Etheldreda about the year 700, but the fact itself need not be doubted, and at any rate the description of the locality to which they came may well be accepted. They are said to have found a deserted site, with broken-down walls, and all the signs of a previously occupied town. This is Bede's account, and the name he gives to the place is 'Grantacaestir', which is certainly the later Cambridge, and is not to be confused with Grantchester, which somehow inherited the name.

This site was on the left bank of the river on the present Castle Hill, which, for convenience' sake, we may call the north side. It was here also, in all probability, that the three Danish kings 'sat in' Cambridge in 875.

There was also a village, or collection of tiny villages, on the other side, centring round what are now known as Market Hill and Peas Hill, which we may hope were more definite hills then

than now, rising up slightly from the marshy land on the banks of the river. The Roman road connecting the settlements followed the line of our Huntingdon road, crossed the river, and continued straight along our Bridge Street and its successors along a gravel ridge. The area round it, all the land, in fact, to the east of the King's Parade, was artificially made land, built up from rubbish heaps of earlier periods.

The passage from the north to the south was at first by ford only, but by the time the Danes came sweeping over the countryside in 870, demolishing whatever churches there were, as well as other buildings, there was a bridge, some simple wooden structure, of sufficient importance to change the name of that part of the town, and subsequently the whole, to 'Grantabrycge,' or in the easier spelling of Domesday Book 'Grantebrige'. This slid by an easy transition into 'Cantebrige', and so 'Cambridge', which then proceeded to give its name to the newly formed shire marked out under Danish rule.

The existence of the two settlements is shown by various indications, but chiefly by a number of cemeteries which have been discovered, one of them under the playing fields of St. John's College. They may at one time have been like rivals facing one another across the river, if this was the boundary between the realms of Mercia and East Anglia, the bridgehead belonging now to the one and now to the other. At the beginning of the seventh century East Anglia had the ascendancy, but lost it when Mercia gained strength shortly afterwards, and when Etheldreda came on the scenes, the Middle Angles were certainly in power.

The change of name under the Danes suggests that the town was now progressing, and it was in fact the only place worthy the name of town in the county, for neither Ely nor Wisbech reached that dignity till a considerable time later. It suffered disaster again in the second inroad of a Danish horde in 1010, when the whole place, then more of a continuous whole, was burned, but it was able to survive and rise again speedily on its ruins.

This was doubtless due to its established position as a trading centre, for the Ely chronicler speaks of 'Irish' merchants appearing there in the tenth century, by which is probably meant Danes coming over with their wares from Dublin and Wexford.

The size of the town is indicated by the statement that at the Norman Conquest it consisted of four hundred houses, of which

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fifty-four were across the river. Of these twenty-seven were pulled down by the Conqueror to make room for the castle which he began to build, so that the centre of gravity seems already to be moving to the south side with its three hundred and fifty houses, where the bulk of the modern town stands.

There were in Saxon times three churches on Castle Hill—St. Peter's, All Saints' (long since disappeared), and probably St. Giles', a very small structure close to the site of the present church of that name; while on the south side there was St. Benet's, a testimony in itself to a fairly wealthy community; a church owned by the monastery of Ely, probably St. Andrew's, or perhaps St. Botolph's; St. George's, which we hear of later as being replaced by the Round Church; and St. Clement's, whose dedication suggests a Danish origin. St. Edward's and St. Botolph's similarly sound Saxon.

In all, therefore, we may count nine churches in pre-Norman times, three on the north side, and six on the south. Domesday Book unfortunately does not help us, for, as we saw in Chapter IV, the commissioner for this part of the country had no interest in churches as such. He just mentions one 'in the fourth ward' in Cambridge, without naming it. It is assumed that this is St. Andrew's. It does not, of course, follow that the churches we know to-day are the same buildings that originally existed. They were all subsequently pulled down, with slight exceptions in part, and rebuilt in more permanent style.

Thenceforward the town figures largely in general history. It formed, for instance, a strong base of operations for the Normans against the last stand of the English, when Hereward barricaded himself with the monks of Ely in the Isle. Then in the struggle between Stephen and the Empress Matilda, Bishop Nigel (1133-69), backed by William the Monk (of whom more later) strongly espoused the cause of Matilda from Cambridge, so incurring the bitter hostility of the monks of Ely, who complained that he despoiled the monastery and shrine of Etheldreda to provide funds for the war. Similarly the town was used by Henry III against the barons, who held Ely in strength. But we may pass over this, and turn to our main subject.

The first forward step of the Church under the Normans was taken by themselves. We have already met Picot, the sheriff of the county, and favourite of the king, who made over to him the lion's

share of manors from which the rightful owners were evicted. The Ely Chronicle describes him as 'a hungry lion, a ravening wolf, a filthy hog'. The similar document from Barnwell calls him 'a man greatly enriched, as he well deserved, by the illustrious king William'. We will not try to arbitrate, but content ourselves with recording the facts. Ely suffered heavily at his hands, much of the convent's property falling to him. On the other hand, he generously endowed the new House of Barnwell.

To be more accurate, it was Picot's wife who began the good work. In their early years in this country she had a serious illness, during which she vowed that if she was granted recovery she would build a church to the honour of St. Giles. She did recover, and proceeded to fulfil her vow.

Whether she actually built St. Giles' church, or whether, as is more likely, she adopted and improved that already standing, is open to question. But she certainly did found a collegiate house with six Canons Regular, and saw to it that her husband provided rich endowments. This was in 1092.

But before the end of his life Picot fell into royal disfavour, and his barony of Bourn and Madingley was given to Pain Peveril. Under this man's auspices in 1112 the canons left St. Giles, and moved across the river to Barnwell. The ceremony was carried through with great solemnity, and they began at once to erect a new church, also dedicated to St. Giles. But scarcely was the foundation laid when they lost their first prior, one Geoffrey, who was buried at the entrance to the Lady Chapel.

The site allotted to them was one of thirteen acres which had been given to Pain by Henry I out of the green common of the town. This encroachment on common rights was a grievance at the time, and never ceased to rankle. We shall see that in the great Peasants' outbreak in 1381 much damage was done to the priory. Yet for long they were on the whole popular, and in their early days they received many small donations of land to increase their estate.

It will be well to follow the story of this priory, partly because towards the end of Edward I's reign one of the canons sat down to write a full history of the house from its start, and also because, in consequence, we have excellent details showing a clear picture of the ordinary life and preoccupations of such a community in these early Middle Ages. In addition, Barnwell remained the

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most flourishing and important house in Cambridge, even after numerous others had sprung up.

The chronicler gives us an interesting explanation of the name Barnwell. The literal meaning is Boys' Fountains, and it was so called because boys and young people used to gather there once a year, on the eve of St. John the Baptist's Day, and after the manner of the English carried on wrestling matches and other sports, and with the clamour of martial cries and musical instruments applauded each other in turn. So the custom began of crowds assembling for the purpose of buying and selling their wares.

This looks very much like the origin of the Midsummer Fair granted by King John to the canons in 1211, and renewed by Henry III in 1229, an institution which has continued to modern days on Midsummer Common. It was a paying proposition for the priory, who must have made a great deal more out of it than the beggarly half mark which they had to pay to the burgesses for the privilege. The said burgesses were always very jealous of their rights, and friction was always on the point of appearing between them and the canons. It broke out once when a certain merchant had absconded from the fair, for reasons over which a kindly veil is drawn, leaving behind him much of his goods. These were promptly claimed by both parties, and lengthy litigation ensued, resulting this time in the defeat of the canons.

The chronicle is cumbered with the reports of many more disputes, sometimes with the town in its corporate capacity, sometimes with individuals, and here the prevalent study of Law must have stood the canons in good stead. Once, for instance, some lands in Madingley were leased to one Geoffrey Howes for the term of his life, after which they were to revert to the priory. There must have been some loophole provided by legal phraseology, for widow Mabel disputed the ruling, and claimed her right to the property. Again the courts were kept busy, but this time the verdict went in favour of the prior. This is only one of many instances that might be quoted, and one may be inclined to suspect that the chronicler made on the whole a shrewd selection of those in which his side came out on top.

Before the end of the twelfth century the increasing prosperity of the House made the first church inadequate for their needs, and it was accordingly pulled down, and another erected, dedicated this time to St. Andrew and St. Giles jointly by the then bishop,

William Longchamp. Then twenty years later the buildings were further increased by the addition of more chapels, as well as by several outhouses, a guest hall, bakehouse, brewhouse, and so on. And in 1254 Prior Jolan was able to raise the number of canons to thirty.

This Jolan is the hero — or victim — of a good story told by our chronicler with that touch of humour which continually shows itself in him as in so many early writers. An estate in Norfolk was left to one James, a chaplain. What he was chaplain of is not stated, but presumably he belonged to the priory, as Jolan be-thought him that this was excessive for such a humble person, and set his wits to work to see how the property could be diverted to the benefit of the church. He accordingly arranged with James to take in exchange the value of board and lodging for two monks, and two marks a year.

To this James agreed, and Jolan set out in all speed with horses and trappings and a great retinue to take possession of the place in Norfolk. Meantime the chaplain met some friends who persuaded him to change his mind. So while Jolan sat in the house after dinner with his friends and neighbours making great merriment, he was suddenly set upon by a gang of ruffians. There was nothing for it but to run, which he and all his company did, escaping some through the windows, some over walls, the prior himself making for the abbey at Dereham. The robbers took off all the horses, thirteen in number, that Jolan had brought, save only one sorry nag, and jeered heartily at the discomfited canons. Jolan promptly appealed to the king, but could get no redress, as Henry was too much occupied with his wars against the barons. And there were never again so many horses seen in Barnwell.

This, however, was not the end. For the prior sued friend James in the courts, and the case was fixed to be heard by the prior of Wormegay in Norfolk. But this was dangerously near to the partisans of James, so Jolan sent off post-haste to the papal legate in London, and obtained a summons for the case to be heard in his court. James was excommunicated, and, realizing that the game was up, made no attempt for forty days to get absolution. He was seen wandering about the streets of Cambridge, and two canons and servants were sent to arrest him, whereupon he fled for protection to the church of the Franciscan Friars. His pursuers tracked him down, and advised him to come out and go with

them. This he refused to do, but, as he was excommunicated, they laid hands on him and dragged him by the feet from the church and put him in gaol, till finally he was fain to make peace with the prior by paying a fine of fifteen marks sterling.

In 1287, while the canons one day were chanting their office, a great storm arose and the cross that stood over the tower was struck, and smoke began to pour down. Some of the brethren climbed up inside the church, and reported that there was no harm. The fire none the less continued to spread, and the wind was so violent that they were helpless. 'How much damage was done from broken pictures, sun-dials, lead windows, loss to neighbours, and expenses for repair of everything, God Almighty knows.'

There ensued a controversy as to whether the church, when repaired, should be re-dedicated or merely 'reconciled'. In the end Bishop John de Kirkeby arrived to reconcile it, and was met by the prior who told him that there was nothing more to be done, meaning, apparently, that the work was completed in every detail and was ready for the service. The bishop looked up at the tower, and said: 'Look there, there are traces still there', and he turned and went away in a rage, excommunicating as he went all the inhabitants of the place. Next day he relented, except towards the prior and convent, on whom he invoked all the plagues of God, cursing, swearing, and threatening worse things to come. The canons who came and knelt before him he cursed again, and would not even give them food and drink.

At long last he was placated, and returned for the reconciliation. He then sprinkled holy water with wine and ashes, going round the church three times inside and three times out, plentifully on the walls, and very plentifully on the faces of the people standing round. He then celebrated Mass at the High Altar, gave forty days' indulgence to all concerned, and repaired to his lunch at Ditton. 'And the same Bishop John died and was buried the next year before Easter.'

One more story. One Mr. Lucas, vicar of Guilden Morden, caused much trouble to the prior and canons, always trying to get his portion raised, and holding up the tithes that were due to the priory. He took advantage of the visitation of the diocese by the Archbishop of Canterbury to appeal to him, on the ground that the living was meagre and slender. The archbishop took his side, but the prior, not content with the judgment, appealed to Rome,

where the Pope also supported the vicar. The dispute dragged on for some years, till Mr. Lucas was constrained to collect a band of youths to seize the tithes that the archbishop had assigned to him. This the canons opposed with a strong hand, and this time it was they who were able to work the oracle, with the result that Lucas was excommunicated. 'But God Almighty, wishing to put an end to strife, unexpectedly raised a heavy adversary against the vicar of St. Egidius, for the Lord struck him with an incurable disease, to wit, the dropsy, of which he died.'

By this time a large number of other churches and religious houses had come into existence. The first church for which we have definite documentary evidence is St. Peter's, outside Trumpington Gate, which must have been founded at least as early as 1087. At a later date it changed its style and became known as St. Mary's the Less.

About the year 1120 the Abbot of Ramsey conveyed a piece of land in the churchyard of St. George to Randulf with the Beard and other members of the fraternity of the Holy Sepulchre for the construction of a church in honour of the Holy Sepulchre, and the Round Church was built by the Gild of that name. It is famous as being one of only four round churches in England, the others being associated with the body of the Knights Templar, whereas this one in Cambridge was only built in imitation of their style. It soon passed from the hands of Ramsey Abbey to Barnwell Priory.

Another important foundation was that of the nunnery of St. Radegund under the aegis of Bishop Nigel. He not only conferred on them their charter, but was instrumental in procuring for them their first large benefaction, consisting of lands in Shelford, from William the Monk, who has been mentioned above. His quarrel with Ely lingered on unduly, and seems to have told on him, for eventually he repented, and ended his days in that monastery. But that is another matter from his treatment of St. Radegund.

This convent bordered on the parishes of All Saints' in Jewry (so called because of its position in the Jewish quarter of the town, to distinguish it from All Saints' across the river) and St. Clement's, and in course of time it gained the advowson and rectorial rights of both, in consequence of which the nuns were involved in constant feuds with the vicar.

They took note of the fact that Barnwell had obtained permission to detach their priory precincts from the parish to which they

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belonged, and to form a 'peculiar parish', exempt from the control of archdeacons. The nuns followed their example in the middle of the thirteenth century, and built their own church. This was a magnificent structure, actually longer than any church in Cambridge, and it had the jealous rights of a parish church.

But the convent fell on evil days. It suffered, it may be, from being a community of women in the midst of men, with consequent dangers. In any case, stories began to be circulated. Investigations were made, and discipline enforced. But time went on and things became worse. Numbers dwindled, and the remaining few were in the worst odour, till at last Bishop Alcock held a formal visitation, and dissolved the convent in 1497. On its site he founded Jesus College, which still has as its splendid chapel the one remaining part of the former church. Its rights as a parish church persisted, at any rate in popular opinion, so that farmers on the estate of the nuns claimed the privilege of frequenting the college chapel until the time of Queen Mary.

It may be noted that the two churches, All Saints' and St. Clement's, are still in the gift of Jesus College.

In 1174 a 'merciless fire' broke out in Cambridge, by which most of the churches in the town, then built of wood, were partly burned, and Trinity Church—of which we have mention now for the first time—was wholly destroyed. This gave occasion for an orgy of rebuilding in the magnificent Early English style, of which so much remains still in the town churches.

How and when and why Cambridge first began to be a recognized centre for students is not known, but it certainly was such long before it emerged into the University that we know. As early as 1109, so Fuller tells us, Joffred, Abbot of Crowland, sent Gilbert and three others to the manor of Cottenham, whence they repaired daily to Cambridge, and drew together a great number of scholars. It must, therefore, have been known as a place of learning for some time before this.

The next date that stands out is that of the famous migration from Oxford in 1209. Troubles of a serious nature had broken out there, with which fortunately we are not concerned, but the result was that a large number fled from Oxford to other centres, of which Cambridge attracted the great majority.

It was no new thing for scholars, apart from any immediate crisis like this, to pass on from one seat of learning to another, so

that the term 'Wandering Scholars' became a well accepted one. But in the ordinary course they would seek a new home where they knew that they could receive fresh instruction, and we are entitled to deduce that 1209 does not mark the birth of systematic education in Cambridge, but that teachers had collected there for one reason or another long before that date. But the organization, as it developed later, and as it presents itself to our minds, was very much in embryo.

A teaching University, whether in England or on the continent, was in its early stages just a Gild of scholars, organized on very much the same lines as Gilds of other sorts. It would consist of masters and apprentices, the latter having to serve seven full years before qualifying themselves as masters, and so being able to join the ranks of teachers, if they wanted to. The master, under the Gild, could fix his fees and conditions; he would usually have his apprentices living with him in the same house; and he exercised disciplinary powers over them, to the extent of being empowered to send them to gaol.

We have seen that social and religious Gilds had long been established in Cambridge, and it may be that among them teachers had arisen. And it is more than probable that Picot's — or his wife's — canons at St. Giles' spent a share of their time with pupils, so that the Oxford refugees did not come merely at a venture, but to a place with a certain reputation already established.

The teaching Gilds, like others, had their chapels and chaplains, and the Cambridge scholars used the churches of St. Benet and St. Mary. But parish churches were still jealous of their rights, and while lodgers in the hostel might adjourn to these churches, wherever the hostels were situated in the town, it was their parish church that claimed them for sacraments and oblations. Their case was exactly parallel to that of the Hospitallers of St. John, whose own chapel was licensed by Bishop Eustace in 1208. The hospital stood in the parish of All Saints, and for the said purpose they were bound as residents to that church, and moreover payments had to be made to the convent of St. Radegund, which owned the rectory.

The masters were as a rule themselves in orders, and religious observances were taken for granted as part of the regular routine. Also the academical dress was the clerical, though this did not necessitate the students proceeding to full ordination.

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The evolution of the teaching bodies into a definite University seems to have been complete in the first half of the thirteenth century, for in 1231 Henry III issued a writ for the governance of Cambridge as a centre of learning, and papal letters to the same effect followed shortly afterwards, showing that by this time it was an organized body with a Chancellor at its head, a dignitary who was appointed by the Bishop of Ely for the express purpose of granting degrees and governing the courses of study. And by the middle of this century there are said to have been as many as two thousand students.

Universities in Europe at this time were very numerous, but none had a faculty of Theology except Paris, Oxford and Cambridge, and perhaps one or two minor ones, and that in Cambridge does not seem to have been organized before the coming of the friars. Their arrival, about 1224, gave a great impetus to the whole educational movement in Cambridge, for, while the monasteries were on the whole apathetic about education, the friars were much more of a learned body, and were enthusiastic teachers, and were welcomed accordingly at the outset, though later on friction developed.

It was their habit on arriving in any University town to sit at the feet of the regent master of the faculty. But in Cambridge both Dominicans and Franciscans began by studying under 'lectores' of their own order, obviously because there were no others. But a faculty had been established by 1250 or thereabouts, for we find our friend Prior Jolan undertaking to carry out the will of Bishop Kilkenny (*d.* 1256), which provided for two priests in perpetuity to be maintained in the theological schools.

Nevertheless, the list of Franciscan masters for the first half century or more shows a preponderance of men who had graduated elsewhere, suggesting that the faculty was not yet firmly established. The friars were thus able to strengthen their own position and incidentally the faculty also, by sending distinguished members of their fraternity here. After 1300 they are all Cambridge graduates.

The same probably is true of the Dominicans, but no list of their masters survives.

It is curious that, apart from the friars, the first non-clerical student in the faculty, so it appears from a certain record, was a retired tradesman. The friars themselves also were mostly laymen.

They found themselves quartered at first in a house that had belonged to one Benjamin the Jew, part of, or adjoining, the public gaol. They disliked having to use the same entrance as the gaol, so they were assisted by the king to improve their position, and were then able to build their own chapel, which, however, was of such meagre dimensions that it was said that a single carpenter could have put it up in one day. This was some thirteen or fourteen years after their first arrival, during which time their numbers had grown from three to a houseful of students, enough to make their objection to the gaol effective.

They were now sufficiently strong to attract the provincial Chapter of the country to meet in Cambridge. This was in the early days when they were still welcome visitors. The official attitude towards them is shown by the fact that Cambridge, with Oxford and Paris, were a full century ahead of all other European Universities in admitting mendicants and other religious orders to degrees, and this tended to make their interest and influence proportionately great. This may have been partly due to the non-existence of the theological degrees elsewhere, but there was mutual action and reaction, and each side helped the other.

But good relations did not last long. There may well have been some element of jealousy against the newcomers from the start, but that gave place to stronger feelings in the universal reaction against the brotherhood owing to the all too early period of their moral and spiritual decline. In the following century, things came to such a pass that the Chancellor of the University had to issue a decree to protect the Carmelites from molestation by the students.

As the University became more self-conscious, so did it grow more jealous of its rights, and claimed independence both of magisterial and ecclesiastical control. Town and gown struggles appear very early in the story, often in the most literal form. According to Fuller, strifes, fights, woundings and murders were rife in 1249 between the burgesses and the scholars of Cambridge, and that in the very Lent.

But it would be wearisome to dwell on the causes of dispute with either mayor or archdeacon, and we may pass to a notable advance brought about by Bishop Hugh de Balsham (1257-86). He has sometimes been credited with the virtual founding of the University as such, or at least of the collegiate system. The latter is nearer

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the truth than the former, but probably the good bishop had little idea that his work would come to be regarded as a definite epoch in the history of Cambridge.

He found a crowd of students of all ages, mostly of very slender means, looking forward to monastic or clerical life, lodging either in the hostels of their masters, or more often among townsfolk, and receiving such accommodation as inexperienced poverty might get at the hands of practised extortioners. There was great need of centralized authority.

His first achievement, in 1276, was to give the University complete independence of the archdeacon's court, a more drastic procedure than might appear at first sight, for in those days the archdeacon was vested with considerable magisterial powers, and was far more than the kindly ecclesiastical superintendent whom we know to-day. Only in the case of rectors, vicars and other priests who were found among the students, were they allowed the choice of jurisdiction, either the Chancellor's or the archdeacon's.

Then, eight years later, he took a step which did actually lead to the formation of colleges in the modern sense. He joined together two existing hostels into one, so far changing the constitution that it was no longer a matter of masters living with their own pupils, but of a hostelry exercising general control over the residents, and encouraging studies, though providing no teaching staff. So came into being St. Peter's Hall, or Peterhouse as it soon came to be called. All members must have received the tonsure, but were not required of necessity to advance to the higher orders. In fact many studied Law or Medicine, and not Theology at all. The other hostels continued as before in considerable numbers, Thomas Fuller, the seventeenth-century historian of Cambridge, giving a list of as many as thirty-four.

Forty years later Peterhouse was followed by Michaelhouse, which was founded for the higher education of the secular clergy, who must be already graduates before entering; and about the same time King's Hall and University Hall. The last named was burned down in 1342, and rebuilt by the sister of the Earl of Clare, who gave it her family name. Michaelhouse and King's Hall continued for two hundred years, till they were incorporated by Henry VIII in his splendid foundation of Trinity College.

In the middle of the fourteenth century four other colleges followed in quick succession, namely Pembroke, Gonville (to

which the name Caius was added two hundred years later), Trinity Hall and Corpus Christi.

The last two arose as a direct result of the Black Death, as is shown elsewhere. Pembroke was founded simultaneously with Denny Abbey in 1347 by Mary de Valentia, widow of the Earl of Pembroke, and Fuller tells us with his usual sense of humour that she 'enjoined her Fellows of Pembroke Hall to visit those nuns, and give them ghostly counsel on just occasions; who may be presumed (having not only a fair invitation, but full injunction) that they were not wanting both in their courteous and conscientious addresses unto them'. We notice incidentally that it was taken for granted that the Fellows were in priest's Orders. And in other colleges as well the clerical element still predominated among Fellows and students, but was not universal.

It was Pembroke that first broke through the rule that members of colleges were to be regarded as subject to the churches in whose parish they resided, for it was granted by the bishop a fully licensed chapel of its own. As time went on, colleges gradually assumed independence by appropriating the rectories of churches, so reversing the situation.

Thus by this time, within sixty years of Bishop Hugh's reforms, there were eight colleges in existence, and so it remained for another eighty years, when a continuous stream appeared, of which some mention will be made in a later chapter.

Two questions of some interest arise, closely connected with each other, to which it is not possible to give a dogmatic answer, though general conclusions are probably not far from the truth. First, from what sources were the students at the University in its early stages drawn? And, secondly, what was the effect on the local clergy? Was their intellectual level appreciably raised?

The students,¹ roughly speaking, fell into two groups, northerners and southerners, allowing always for a number who came from farther afield, even from the continent. Each of the groups had its own procurator, to control the members and see to their interests. This distinction between the two proctors of to-day has, of course, long ago disappeared, though the office and title remain.

Among the southerners the majority came from the counties of East Anglia, which were at the time the most thickly populated

¹ I am indebted for what follows to Professor Hamilton Thompson's *Cambridge and its Colleges*, and to a private letter from him.

and the most wealthy in the country, apart from London itself. From them would come many of the sons of well-to-do merchants and men of the middle classes of all sorts, who would take up one or another of the three prescribed courses — Law, Medicine and Theology. There were also sons of country farmers and small proprietors, who, brought up in the household of some clerical patron who recognized their promise, were early designed for an official career.

There can be little doubt that both at Oxford and Cambridge there were in particular persons who were natives of places on college property, and that it was on such places that the authorities kept their eye for promising students. Such men would in due time be appointed to college livings, and the natural tendency also of the Bishop of Ely and the monastic patrons of Fenland churches would be to find graduates for their best livings.

Of the theological students many would pass on to the monasteries, while in the villages a number of incumbents would certainly be graduates, and the title Magister (Master of Arts) begins to appear in the list of rectors and vicars, chiefly the former. Where livings were valuable, the rectories were constantly filled by graduates from quite an early period. These would be in the first instance graduates in Law who had studied at foreign Universities, but also, as time went on, at Cambridge itself.

Later on many priests who had not before taking holy Orders been able to afford a University education, or who had previously studied in one of the other faculties than Theology, flocked to Cambridge and it may have been to supplement the advantage held by the favoured few that Michaelhouse was founded, though, as has been said, its avowed intention was to cater only for graduates. But it would remain the case that many of the parish priests, perhaps the majority, were still simple folk, springing from the land, and not rising much above the level of their fellows.

THE BLACK DEATH AND LOLLARDISM

In the middle of the fourteenth century came one of the greatest calamities of all times. The Black Death, which we now know as the bubonic plague, began by devastating western Asia, swept across Europe, and reached England in the summer of 1348. Through the whole of the next year it raged, laying low multitudes in a way that no war has ever done. No part of England was spared, though the mortality was unevenly distributed, even among neighbouring villages, as has been shown in a previous chapter. The crowded life of the monasteries was particularly favourable to the spread of the disease, and they suffered accordingly. In Cambridge it is said that the parishioners were swept away in heaps. The parishes of All Saints and St. Giles were united, most of the parishioners of the former being dead. There were three Masters of St. John's Hospital in as many months. In Ely little or no rent could be paid to the priory from one street, as it was no longer inhabited. The mortality among the clergy was immense. At the time of the outbreak the Bishop of Ely, Thomas de Lisle, was abroad, and he wrote from Rome appointing John, Prior of Barnwell, to dispose of all benefices that should fall vacant, and others in turn in the event of John's death. John did, in fact, die before the letter reached him. Another notable victim in the neighbourhood was the Abbot of Ramsey. Altogether about three hundred and fifty clergy in the diocese died, including some ninety who were beneficed.

For the three years before the Plague the average number of institutions was nine; this year there were ninety-seven. For the seven preceding years the average number of ordinations was just over one hundred, for the seven following years it was forty; and of these many were for other dioceses, and more than half were members of religious orders, so that few were left for the parishes, while in 1349 itself there were none at all, though this may have been partly owing to the absence of the bishop.

The ravages of the Plague were instrumental in bringing into existence two new colleges in Cambridge, but for rather different reasons. The mortality called for vast numbers of Masses for the

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souls of the departed, especially of the local clergy, whose survivors took advantage of the situation to demand exorbitant fees. To counteract this the Gilds of Corpus Christi and the Blessed Virgin were formed, with the express condition that members should celebrate Masses for the souls of their fellows. These united Gilds blossomed out into Corpus Christi College.

Then, in view of the serious depletion in the ranks of the clergy, Bishop Bateman, of Norwich, founded Trinity Hall as a nursery for the Church, though he seems to have had an ulterior motive in fostering the education of canonists among the civilians to further the interests of Rome, as a counterblast to the limitations on the papal power imposed by statutes of Parliament, of which more anon.

But the effects of the Plague were not confined to the mere question of population. The whole basis of society in the country was shaken by it. There had for some time already been signs of the disruption of the old feudal system, with which, however, we are concerned only in so far as the Church was affected. The general state of affairs was far from satisfactory. The Church was regarded as the dominant power behind the State, enjoying its aristocratic tyranny, and condemning the lower ranks to perpetual servitude. The bishops were first and foremost statesmen, king's counsellors, men of finance, rather than Fathers in God. It was the age of Langland and his *Piers Plowman*, who voiced the growing sense of oppression and hatred. The clergy were ignorant and inefficient. The friars were notoriously fat livers. Abuses of all sorts were rife. And the bishops knew, or at any rate cared for, little of what was going on. Vacancies in parishes were left long unfilled, while they carried on their official duties in London. Parishes were more and more appropriated by the monasteries, who seized the tithes, and sent their own members or other substitutes to perform the routine services. Livings were given in plurality to rectors who seldom went near them, and were often themselves laymen, who put in 'curates' in their place on a miserable pittance.

Meantime, as a result of the Plague, landlords were left without tenants, and landless labourers were so reduced in numbers that they might have demanded two or three times their previous wages. At Barton alone three hundred and fifty-two acres were escheated to the lord of the manor, and sixty-two were left unlet.

The time was ripe for a great social upheaval, and the flood-

gates were opened when John Wyclif began his crusade against all the abuses of the Church, demanding its total disendowment, and preaching a practical communism. There could be no real ownership without the grace of God, he said, and there ought to be community of goods. He applied this doctrine generally, and in particular to the Church. The clergy should live on free alms, and be free to instruct the laity from the pure Bible itself.

It was not primarily theological dogmas that he was concerned with, but rather the external policy of the Church. But theology followed, as its failings had led to such great abuses. Temporal possessions ruin the Church, and drive out the Christian virtues of faith, hope and charity. This teaching he promulgated by the help of his 'Poor Preachers', the first of the Lollards. He sent them out to proclaim that the priesthood of the Church in communion with Rome is not that given by Christ to his Apostles; that the monk's vow of celibacy had for its consequences unnatural lust; that transubstantiation was a feigned miracle, and led to idolatry; that prayers made over wine, bread, oil, wax, incense, altars of stone, vestments, were merely magical; that no special prayers should be made for the dead; that auricular confession made to the clergy was the root of clerical arrogance and the cause of indulgences and other abuses; and so forth.

He did thus in great measure anticipate the Reformation, but a purified Rome he would still support, and a Church restored to its primitive ideals. In this way not only did social demands and theological reform become inextricably intermingled to an extent that has never to this day been wholly unravelled, but unfortunately political complications also entered.

The movement was favoured by men in high positions, from John of Gaunt onwards, for their own particular reasons, which can hardly have been identical with Wyclif's. And for the time being fully half the population were numbered among its followers. When, then, open disturbances broke out, it was not unnatural that the blame should fall upon Wyclif. It was, however, certainly unjust to accuse him of fomenting revolt, but at the same time it was beyond the power of the peasant who found himself in dire straits to analyse the causes, or to estimate the remedies, and it is not surprising that the Lollards made speedy headway among the masses, or that many of the poorer clergy threw in their lot with them. Yet by a curious contradiction, when the revolt did break

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out, some of these same clergy sympathized for precisely the opposite reason, through their fear that if they stood aloof, it would be the Lollards who would command the popular following. It is certain, in any case, that Wyclif himself bore no responsibility for lawlessness, of which he strongly disapproved.

An additional factor in the general confusion was the widespread decay of theology, and more especially of preaching. This both increased the fame of the Lollards, and also brought all popular discourses under suspicion with the authorities; and sermons ceased to form part of the church service, so much so that we find injunctions to the clergy to deliver a sermon at least once a year. To meet the decay, in 1348, just before the Plague, Edmund Conville, himself a clergyman, and vicar-general of the diocese, had founded his college, as an attempt to encourage learning among the clergy.

At the same time be it noted that the new teaching undoubtedly was furthered by the state of education at this time, when literacy was probably more widely spread than at any time before or for three hundred years afterwards. It is said that more than half the people could read, and this is evidenced by the practice of posting up bills in public places, or distributing them. Pews in churches began to have book-rests, the number of Grammar Schools was on the increase, and Chantry Schools flourished everywhere. Wyclif and his preachers were not slow to avail themselves of this. Whatever the exact cause of it, it was, broadly speaking, directed against the existing form of government in which Church and State stood together. But in Cambridgeshire, at any rate, it was not immediately aimed at the Church, but at the iniquitous Poll Tax which bore so hardly on the poor. This was the match that started the conflagration.

It was, moreover, mooted about that the king himself was in reality favourable to the movement, and this must have encouraged many to join in actively who otherwise would have sat on the fence.

This county seems on the whole to have been comparatively little affected by Wyclif's teaching. As for the University, Wyclif had himself withdrawn half a dozen of the leading theological teachers, who were of his way of thinking, to Oxford, leaving practical unanimity in favour of the old ways. And in the county there are but few recorded instances of clergy or laymen being

accused of heresy, though it may be that evidence is lacking. There certainly was much sympathy with the Peasants' Revolt, but, as we have seen, the motives were very mixed, and it was social grievance that came chiefly to the fore.

Many cross-currents were thus at work, which between them did not tend to calm the troubled waters. Matters came to a head with the outbreak of the revolt in 1381, headed in the south by Wat Tyler.

The climax in East Anglia was reached in the three days' Reign of Terror, June 15th to 17th, but even so only some third of the villages in the county had trouble, and in not more than half that number was there serious rioting. What would have happened if the Bishop of Norwich had not taken strong and immediate measures to quell the uprising, it is impossible to say.

On the whole, few religious houses were attacked. The Hospitallers of St. John appear to have been obnoxious to the rioters, possibly because of their supposed intimacy with the Poll Tax collectors or the justices. Three of their preceptories specially suffered. From Chippenham oxen, linen and woollen clothes and other goods were stolen to the value of £100. To Shingay men rode out from Cambridge, and destroyed the manor of the Hospitallers, and carried off a chalice, church vestments, bedding and horses. Duxford suffered in a similar manner.

In other Houses the documents were specially sought for, with the intention, no doubt, of destroying the title-deeds to what was considered superfluous property. The Court Rolls and other papers of the Bishop of Ely were seized and burned. So were those of the Prior of Ely at West Wratting and the Prioress of Ickleton. The bishop's gaol was forced and prisoners let loose.

There were disturbances at other villages, such as Bottisham, Waterbeach and Swaffham Prior, but Anglesey Priory, though so near to Bottisham, was untouched.

In Cambridge the coming of the rioters was a heaven-sent opportunity for mobs to burst out and indulge the ever-present feud between Town and Gown. Not for the first or the last time the market place was the scene of wild frenzy, with a howling crowd, of whom the most part knew not wherefore they were come together. They broke open the gates of Bene't College (the precursor of Corpus Christi), laid hold on the charters with all their evidence of granted privileges, and on the valuable college plate, and threw

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the lot on to their great bonfire outside. The particular incentive in this case was the 'candle rents' due from the town to the college.

They attacked the Chancellor, demanding that the University be subject to the power and jurisdiction of the town, and burned the University charters. They broke into St. Mary's Church while service was going on, and into the house of the Carmelite Brothers.

Thence they went on to Barnwell, and did damage estimated at the — for those days — vast sum of £2,000. But then it was that the Bishop of Norwich arrived with a strong force, and suppressed the madness.

Although in these three fateful days the majority of the regular houses escaped all injury, enough was done to illustrate the hatred of them shared by so many of the common people, while the minor clergy, the unbeneficed and maybe some of the beneficed also, provided not a few eager partisans. This can hardly be wondered at when many of them were so dreadfully poor that they were reduced to stealing in order to keep body and soul together.

The rebellion reacted both ways on the attitude towards the new preaching. On the one hand, there were those who maintained that it came as the judgment of God on the country for suffering such heresy to arise. And on the other, it increased sympathy with any who would risk themselves for the sake of truth and liberty.

A royal commission was appointed in 1413 with instructions to 'arrest all Lollards who have traitorously planned the king's death and other things to the destruction of the Catholic faith and the estate of the lords and magnates of the realm'. This was issued to twenty counties, but not to East Anglia or Cambridgeshire, though there had been in the previous year what was possibly an isolated case when a certain Peter Hirfonde had been called upon in Cambridge publicly to renounce the teaching of Wyclif, and to take oath that he would never teach or defend their conclusions.

Owing to its continued orthodoxy Cambridge was now the recipient of royal favours rather than Oxford, and that fact helped towards the foundation in 1441 of King's College, the first college to be added for nearly ninety years.

Throughout the reign of Edward III the ever-smouldering resentment against the domination of Rome broke out more vigorously. No question of difference in doctrine arose at all, and when Wyclif and his followers, the Lollards, did attack, or seem to

attack, the accepted Catholic teaching, they were emphatically branded as heretics. It was foreign interference that rankled, and this applied to French abbeys and priories as much as to the papacy itself. There were many religious houses in England appropriated by such bodies abroad, who drew the tithes, appointed the rectors and generally drained the country of huge sums of money.

The Pope, on his part, appointed the bishops, and received Provision Fees in return, and so exercised no small control, both ecclesiastical and financial. The tension was increased by the coincidence of the 'Papal Captivity' at Avignon with the period of the French wars, as the Pope while there was necessarily under French influence.

Attempts were made, accordingly, in the middle of the century to seize all alien priories, and hand them over to the king. There followed the famous Statutes of Provisors, which secured the rights of English patrons, lay and ecclesiastical, and ruled that any preferences made by the Pope should for that turn be null and void, and placed in the hands of the king.

This move, however, was but partly successful, as the king had no wish to bring further trouble on his head by breaking with the Pope, and the bishops acknowledged him always as their spiritual head.

Here we have the background for several incidents connected with our diocese about this time. To begin with, the see of Ely was vacant in 1345. The Convent of Ely unanimously elected Alan de Walsingham, as they, technically at any rate, had a perfect right to do. The Pope superseded him in favour of Thomas de L'Isle, a Dominican friar of Winchester, who five years previously had been sent by the king on an embassy to the Pope and was still with him at Avignon.

A compromise was arrived at, in which the Pope came off best, for de L'Isle was only called upon to renounce the Pope's Bull of Provision, and declare that he held the temporalities of the see from the king, and on that condition was then admitted to Ely. But further complications arose later.

He conducted himself as bishop with great haughtiness, and maintained a magnificent retinue, while his spiritual duties lay but lightly upon him. We have already seen that when the Plague broke out, he was again abroad, and remained safely in Rome till

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the trouble was over. It was not long after his return that he fell foul of a neighbouring landowner, Blanche, Lady Wake, over the boundaries of their estates in Huntingdonshire. While the dispute was still proceeding, a farmhouse belonging to my lady was burned down, and the bishop was charged with aiding, abetting and consenting, and sentenced to pay a fine of £900. This infuriated him, and he brought a writ against the jurors, but the records of the court which he wished to be scrutinized had vanished. He then approached the king while out with the royal hawks, and hinted broadly that he was unable to obtain justice because Lady Blanche was a relative of the king. This piece of tactlessness did not help him.

Worse was to come, for Ralph, a Norman, one of the bishop's retinue, killed one of Lady Blanche's servants, and escaped to Normandy. The bishop found himself once more in the courts, being tried before a jury of commoners, and not before his peers, as he demanded. He was acquitted of actual murder, but found guilty of harbouring and concealing the murderer. His temporalities were then seized, and again he fled to the Pope at Avignon, who took up his cause, and entered into a lengthy dispute with the king, which was still in process when the bishop conveniently died in 1361.

His successor, Simon Langham, was appointed by the Pope, apparently as a matter of course and without opposition. The Pope, moreover, about this time renewed his claim to reserve to himself absolutely all archbishoprics and bishoprics that fell vacant by the translation of their holders to other sees, but acted equally, as at Ely in this case, when the vacancy was caused by death. To this extent the repeated steps taken to limit his power proved ineffective.

Another small but significant indication of the persistence of the Pope in maintaining his authority was shown in the reign of Henry V, when William Powcher, Prior of Ely, and his successors, were given the right by the Pope to use the mitre, ring and other pontifical insignia not only in Ely, but wherever they might chance to give the solemn benediction after Mass, save only in the presence of the papal legate.

The other source of friction, appropriation to foreign houses, showed itself a few years later at Swavesey. At the Norman Conquest the village, with manor and church, was given by William to

Alan of Brittany, who in his turn paid tithes to the Benedictine Abbey of Angers, which stands just north of the Loire. He gave to this abbey the church of Swavesey with all fees and offerings, free of episcopal exaction, service or custom, except for the payment of sixpence at Easter for chrism. Together with this went the tithe on all the earl's property in Swavesey, Barham, Papworth, Wimpole, Toft and Waterbeach. The priest of each village was left with one field of wheat and one of oats. The French abbey continued in possession for three hundred years, one of its monks being instituted as rector, and administering the estate. But in the latter part of the fourteenth century, that is, about the time we are discussing, it ceased to be of any use to the abbey because of the Anglo-French wars. It was therefore transferred to the Carthusian Priory of St. Anne, near Coventry, and this arrangement was later confirmed by Henry IV.

Though it is commonly spoken of as Swavesey Priory, this is not strictly correct, as it never was a priory at all, in the sense of a community of monks under the rule of a prior. It came to be so called because the rector was a monk of the French priory.

In 1374 Lawrence Russell, the prior, refused, in conjunction with other clergy in the county, to pay the tenth granted to the king for his wars. He was, in consequence, excommunicated for sixty days, but still remained obdurate. His living was then sequestered on the ground that he had been appointed by papal provision, and had not paid the requisite fees to the English ecclesiastical authorities.

A quarter of a century later another little storm arose, for in 1401 one John Judde was presented to the living by the then patrons, overriding the claims of Coventry. He met with resistance, so came with an armed force, complete with bows and arrows, swords and small poniards, clubs and choppers, and a great multitude of men to Swavesey and Dry Drayton, and seized the goods of the prior. He seems to have made good his claim, but it may have been this that led to the confirmation by the king of the rights of Coventry.

Another ancient controversy, which had raged bitterly for three centuries, was settled in this same year, 1401. The beginning of it goes back to Saxon times. While Cambridgeshire was still part of the diocese of Lincoln, it shared an archdeacon with the county of Huntingdon, but the Isle of Ely was always exempt from any con-

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trol, either from bishop or archdeacon. Full civil, as well as ecclesiastical, powers over it were vested in the abbey of Ely, which accordingly exercised almost regal authority. When the new diocese was formed in 1109, an archdeacon of *Cambridge* was installed, while the sacrist of what was now the cathedral church retained power in the Isle. The second Archdeacon of Cambridge, with the connivance of his uncle, Bishop Hervey, assumed the title of Archdeacon of Ely, overriding the privileges and immunities of the abbey.

A long and spirited controversy ensued, which lasted, as has been said, for very nearly three hundred years. It was finally settled, through the mediation of Archbishop Arundel, who knew the intricacies of the problem well enough, having himself been Bishop of Ely before his translation to Canterbury. The parties now concerned were his successor at Ely, John Fordham, and the archdeacon, John Welborn.

The bishop certainly came off best in the terms agreed upon. He was given the custody of all benefices in the city and diocese, and all ordinary jurisdiction in the city, and the deaneries of Ely and Wisbech, as well as the manors of Wivelingham (Willingham), Fen Ditton, Horningsea, Teversham, Balsham, Great Shelford, Thriplow, Little Grandsden and Hardwick. He had the control of all religious houses, and in the civil department was granted the Probate of Wills, with other kindred rights. He retained the right to hold his diocesan synod, and a triennial visitation.

The archdeacon on his side was given the rectory of Haddenham, in addition to Wilburton, which he previously held, his consistory court, and visitation of his archdeaconry.

In outline this settlement involved the retention by the bishop, as the legal inheritor of the abbots of old time, of undisputed sway over the Isle of Ely, with generous additions. He thus continued to be magistrate-in-chief, with his own justices and courts, as well as ecclesiastical head, while the archdeacon reverted to his own domain, in which, however, he also held powers that no archdeacon to-day would either expect or desire.

At the turn of the century, Fuller tells us, the town called Bottlesham (contracted to Botsham) gained fame as the 'Nursery of refined Wits', affording a triumvirate of learned men who were born there. They were all known by the name of the village, but were not related to each other.

The first was William Bottlesham, once Fellow of Pembroke Hall, and made Bishop of Bethlehem in Syria by the Pope, though he never seems to have travelled so far. He was translated to Llandaff, and afterwards to Rochester. He died in 1399.

Secondly, John Bottlesham, who was brought up in Peterhouse, of which he was a generous benefactor. He likewise was appointed to the bishopric of Rochester, but died, in 1401, before he could take up the office.

The third was Nicholas Bottlesham, a Carmelite, and Prior of the Carmelites in Cambridge. He died in 1435.

During the second half of the fifteenth century, the period covered by the Wars of the Roses, the life of the Church, says Professor Oman, seems to have been in a more stagnant and torpid condition than at any previous period of English history. The Wycliffite movement, which at the beginning of the century seemed to give promise of better things, had died down under persecution. It lingered on among a small class at the Universities, especially at Cambridge, and had its support among the common folk. But for the most part, in so far as it survived at all, it was more of a political than religious nature. Edicts continued to be issued against it, and martyrs appeared here and there.

Bishop Gray of Ely (1454-78) took proceedings against three men for heresy. More than thirteen charges were brought against them, resembling closely those against their predecessors as Lollards seventy years before. They protested against images and pilgrimages, and the baptism of children. They declared that transubstantiation was a fiction, mental prayer in a field better than in a church, Extreme Unction was useless, and the Pope was Antichrist. On being brought to trial they all abjured.

For the rest, Bishop Gray, like nearly all his contemporary prelates, was a mere politician, with nothing spiritual about him. The most that can be said of him is that he did encourage learning in the University.

And some of the lesser lights of the Church were still chiefly concerned with material matters. There lingered a certain truculence about the Priory of Barnwell, for when one Thomas Farmfield, of Chesterton, had rendered himself obnoxious to the monks by opposing the authority they claimed in the manor of Chesterton, he was attacked by three priests, who were canons of Barnwell, with others, who lay in wait for him between Stourbridge Chapel

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and Cambridge. They beat and wounded him so severely that he had his wounds to show for many years afterwards. There was good reason for supposing that the instigator was the prior himself.

The new bishop, John Morton, who became Archbishop of Canterbury eight years later, figured more prominently than any other in the politics and intrigues of the time. He is the second of two Bishops of Ely to have the distinction of appearing in the plays of Shakespeare.

The first was John Fordham, half a century earlier. He was bishop for thirty-seven years, under four kings, Richard II, Henry IV, V and VI, and died in 1425. He comes in at the beginning of *Henry V*, but merely as a catspaw to Archbishop Arundel, and is not even allowed his own name, being described just as 'Bishop of Ely'.

The play opens with the determination of the king to assert his claim to the crown of France, the Salic Law notwithstanding, and for this he needs the support of the Church. This Arundel is prepared to give whole-heartedly by the help of lengthy and intricate arguments. But his real reason is a more subtle one. Towards the end of the previous reign, a Bill had been urged before Parliament, by which the Church stood to lose the better half of its possessions. This could be countered only by the help of the king. So Arundel argues — we will 'give a greater sum Than ever at one time the clergy yet Did to his predecessors part withal'. So all would be satisfied. The king would have his funds for the prosecution of the war, and the Church would be relieved of spoliation. To give Arundel the chance to make the position clear, the Bishop of Ely is introduced, assuming what, no doubt, was his true character, that of a scheming politician concerned first and foremost with his temporalities.

Returning to Morton, he again is a very minor figure in Shakespeare's plot, but has his own small part to play, and is not this time overshadowed by Canterbury. The play is *Richard III*, and the occasion the preparations for the coronation of the ill-fated Edward V. A group of counsellors are found assembled, discussing the best date for that event, and while they are talking, in comes Richard, Duke of Gloucester, Regent for his nephew, the young prince. Ostensibly he joins the discussion, but he has deeper plans, which he wishes to discuss with the Duke of Buckingham, his con-

federate. By the way, my lord of Ely, you have, I am told, first-class strawberries in your garden at Holborn; do fetch us a basket.

So out goes my lord of Ely, and returns shortly afterwards with them, only to be surprised to find that Gloucester and Buckingham have forgotten all about them and gone out.

Later in the play, when Gloucester has become Richard III, news comes that Morton has fled to the Earl of Richmond, soon to become king himself as Henry VII, and Richard's reaction is not cheerful. 'Ely with Richmond troubles me more near Than Buckingham and his rash-levied strength.' And later again Stanley reports: 'Richmond is on the seas . . . Stirred up by Dorset, Buckingham, and Ely, He makes for England, here to claim the crown.'

Shakespeare's allusions to Morton are quite historical, including, even, it would seem, the strawberry story. He does not mention that the sequel to the coronation plan was the arrest of Morton, with others who were loyal to Edward IV. Morton was committed to the Tower, and thence transferred to Brecknock, under the charge of Buckingham, whose designs against the king he carefully fostered. He escaped abroad, and returned, as we have seen, with Richmond. When Richmond secured the crown as Henry VII, Morton became his principal adviser, and within a year was promoted to Canterbury.

All this time his diocese of Ely can have seen little of him. His fame there rests chiefly on his contribution to the drainage of the fens by the construction of 'Morton's Leam' from Wisbech to Peterborough.

The sad story of the closing years of St. Radegund's nunnery may be told here, as it falls within the period covered by this chapter.

Discipline seems to have been lax for a considerable time. In 1373, when the diocese was vacant, a visitation of the monasteries and convents in the diocese was held by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and revealed that the prioress 'did not correct Dame Elizabeth de Cambridge for absenting herself from Divine Service, and allowing friars of different orders, as well as scholars, to visit her at inopportune times and to converse with her, to the scandal of religion'. Men used to hang about the gates and tether their horses in the paddocks. Dame Elizabeth was doubtless more in her element on picnics to Lynn, like her predecessor Dame Joan, than in pursuing the more ascetic forms of piety.

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Not long afterwards a 'sheep wandering from the fold among thorns', in the form of an escaped nun, was found in Lincoln. She was duly brought back to the convent, and ordered to be kept in custody, with the imposition of salutary penance.

Moreover, the prioress was found to be much at fault in her finance, and this may in part have accounted for her negligence in finding priests to celebrate Mass for benefactors, as they would expect the customary fee. The refectory, too, was in disrepair, not covered by a suitable roof.

In the middle of the next century there were only about a dozen nuns, with three male and four female servants, besides half a dozen outside workers. The friar confessor received the lordly stipend of six and eightpence a year, while £5 was paid to a chaplain from St. Andrew's for saying Masses.

In 1487, when the office of prioress was vacant, Bishop Alcock decreed that there was no nun fit to be elected to the post, so he introduced one from outside. But the newcomer was unable to redeem the situation, and a few years later the bishop sent a report to Henry VI to the effect that the convent was so dilapidated by waste and extravagance that they could not maintain services for the customary hospitality.

There was nothing for it but for the bishop to take the drastic step of closing the house altogether, which he did, using the site and remaining buildings for Jesus College, and part of the present beautiful chapel is a relic of the old convent church.

CHAPTER IX

THE REFORMATION

If the origin and history of Lollardy were due to an unanalysable blend of secular and religious causes, the same is true, and much more so, in the case of the Reformation.

For centuries the resentment in this country against the authority of Rome had been smouldering. This was in no way the result of a religious or dogmatic unrest. The common people, the inarticulate masses, accepted without question the supremacy of the Pope, and, under him, of the bishops and monasteries.

But for the Crown it was a different matter. The Church owed a double allegiance, to the king and to the Pope, and the two were constantly clashing. Monasteries were explicitly exempt from all civil authority except that of the Pope himself, and the clergy also to a considerable extent. Any offence committed by a man, even in the most minor orders, called forth at once the appeal to clerical immunity. Large revenues also were diverted from the country, and the position often verged on the intolerable.

It is a lasting blot on our history that the climax should have been reached in the unsavoury manner in which it did happen. Henry VIII was determined to annul his marriage with Catherine. About the end of 1526 his confidants became aware of the fact, and for six years the miserable controversy dragged on. The Pope flatly refused to grant the divorce. Therefore the Pope must be disregarded, and the Church in England compelled to take action, which meant first and foremost acknowledging the king as Supreme Head of the Church in this country. How he succeeded in the end is written in all history books.

Meantime there was the growing influence of the Protestant Reformation on the continent. It was in 1519 that Luther nailed his famous theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg, and from that time on his writings were circulated far and wide. There was considerable intercourse at this time between North Germany and the east coast of England, and merchants of all sorts introduced their goods into this part of the country. So it came about that Luther's works were smuggled in, concealed in ships' cargoes, and were widely spread in East Anglia, and the University was a natural gathering point for new doctrines.

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The situation briefly was that the king, while combating with all his might the papal supremacy, was violently orthodox in his doctrinal opinions, and would brook no innovations. Those who opposed him on either count had to suffer for it, and on one grim occasion, in 1540, six executions took place at Smithfield, Dr. Barnes, of whom we shall hear more, and two others being burned for heresy, while the other three were hanged for treason in denying the king's supremacy.

Henry did, however, flirt with the new doctrines in his later years, when it suited his convenience. As the result of his policy and his quarrel with the Pope, he found himself in dangerous isolation from every European power, and therefore set about the attempt to conciliate the King of Denmark and the German Protestants, using the same Dr. Barnes as an emissary. He was therefore fain to modify his attitude towards the reformers at home, but his vacillations were baffling, and time-servers were hard put to it to keep in favour.

The history of the Reformation as such can be found in many books. In this the concern is confined to the reaction towards it, and the contribution made to it, in this county. And, viewed even in the light of national events, that is no small matter. To quote Professor Oman,¹ 'The origins of a Protestant party, who were not mere Wycliffites, but had been first interested in dogmatic controversy by coming upon the works of Luther, can be traced back to the year 1521 and to the University of Cambridge. There a knot of scholars, some of whom were to perish early at the stake, while others were destined to become the leaders of the English Reformation, came together and encouraged each other to test the received doctrines of contemporary orthodoxy by searching the Scriptures and the works of the Fathers.'

These are the men whom we wish to follow, though some of them — a notable example is Latimer — after coming into prominence first at Cambridge, passed on into a wider sphere, and to that extent fall out of our record.

At the same time there were stalwart defenders of the old régime, beginning with the successive bishops and heads of colleges, who were faithful supporters of the Crown in this and the following reigns, for the simple reason that, if they were not, they could be, and often were, promptly deposed. Many leading ecclesiastics

¹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*: 'English History'.

were interested chiefly in the political side of things, the supremacy of the king or the Pope, and the problem of the divorce.

The Bishop of Ely at this time, Nicholas West (1515-34), fits into this category. He was employed on many diplomatic missions by both the kings under whom he lived. He is chiefly remembered now for his fine memorials that he has left of himself in part of the Provost's Lodgings at King's, and the magnificent chapel in the cathedral which bears his name and in which he is buried.

But there were also men of deep devotion on both sides. Among the Catholics the figure of John Fisher stands supreme here, though he resigned his official positions in Cambridge as early as 1504, when he became Bishop of Rochester. He maintained, however, a close connection with his University to the end of his life, and his influence was deeply felt.

For a year before he left for Rochester he held the Margaret Professorship, which had just been founded for supplying evangelical instruction of the laity in the surrounding country and elsewhere, and for encouraging preaching in the vernacular, which had almost entirely fallen into disuse, wider terms of reference than are usual for University professorships. No better man could have been found for this admirable work.

The smaller towns and villages were characterized, as might be expected, by a conservatism which resented any drastic change, and clung to their old ways as long as they were able. In particular, the dissolution of the monasteries appears to have been as keenly disapproved as in most other parts of the country, though it did not cause open rebellion. Nevertheless, Wisbech has acquired the reputation of being the earliest home of Reformation principles in this country.

Most of the early Reformation party in Cambridge were natives of Norfolk, including the man who stands out as their first leader, Thomas Bilney. He was born near Norwich in the last decade of the fifteenth century, and became in due time a member of Trinity Hall, whence he took holy Orders in 1519. He was attracted by the edition of the New Testament published by Erasmus three years before his ordination, and the study of that proved to be a turning-point in his life.

This Erasmus, a Dutchman born, was famous throughout Europe as an exponent of the 'New Learning'. Especially he insisted on the revival of the study of Greek as the basis of all New

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Testament scholarship. Quotations in plenty have been culled from his works to show on the one hand that he was a firm Catholic, and on the other that he was a convinced Reformer. The truth is that he was first and last a scholar, and his mission was to induce men to open their minds to receive truth from whatever source. He had been invited to Cambridge by Fisher, and spent a few years there lecturing and teaching with an effect out of all proportion to the time occupied. It has been said that Cambridge was the seed-plot of the Reformation, and it was Erasmus who planted the seed.

As soon as Luther's works became known in Cambridge, they divided scholars into two camps, and at the moment when heretical books were being collected and burned on Market Hill, a band of eminent men was meeting secretly in the White Horse Inn (now the Bull Hotel), to discuss them eagerly. Bilney was the heart and soul of the group, which included two future Archbishops, Thomas Cranmer and Matthew Parker, Dr. Foreman of Queens' College, who concealed and kept many of Luther's writings when they were being searched for everywhere to be burned, William Tyndale, the translator of the Bible, Stafford, Divinity Reader, Dr. Thissel of Pembroke Hall, and, after an interval, Hugh Latimer, afterwards Bishop of Worcester.

In 1525 Bilney obtained a licence to preach in the diocese of Ely, which he proceeded to do with great vigour. He travelled up and down, denouncing saint and relic worship, together with pilgrimages to Walsingham, Canterbury and elsewhere, a form of devotion which incurred the special anger of reformers. But he met with no official opposition at first, as he remained orthodox as to the authority of the Pope, the sacrifice of the Mass, and the doctrine of transubstantiation. It was not long, however, before he was summoned to appear before Wolsey and compelled to renounce Lutheranism. This he did, but after two years of uneasy conscience he left his College for his native Norfolk, where he resumed his previous style of preaching. Once more he was arrested, and the result this time was fatal, for he was burned at the stake at Norwich in 1531.

By all accounts he was a man of great personal charm and genuine piety. In Cambridge he made a practice of visiting the sick in lazar-houses, and prisoners in gaol, habits which, in view of the horrible conditions then existing, called for a reckless disregard of

his own comfort and health which it is difficult to appreciate in days of modern civilization. He cut his meals down to one a day in college, so as to give the rest of his rations to the sick and poor. On one famous occasion, acting in conjunction with Latimer, he was instrumental in compelling the authorities to spare the life of an unhappy woman who had been unjustly accused of murdering her own child.

But there is something pathetic about him. 'Little Bilney' he was called from his diminutive stature, and 'little Bilney' he was, quite unfitted to meet the hurly-burly of politico-religious storms. Professor Powicke describes him as a curious mixture of self-confidence and timidity, a man who could not remain firm, and could not let things be. He had no stability, and yet was no coward. His utterances combine strange echoes of apocalyptic fury against the papacy, the powerful impressions made by Tyndale's writings, hatred of idolatrous roods and dainty singing and all the pomp and vanity of clerical life, mingled with his firm belief in the central doctrines of the Catholic Church.

He would be remembered, if for nothing else, for the part he played in changing the whole tenor of Latimer's life. Of that in a moment, but first a word must be said of an earlier convert that he made in the person of Dr. Barnes.

Barnes was Prior of the Augustinian Friars in Cambridge, the best and least corrupted order at this time, the one to which Luther himself had belonged. He studied at Louvain, and became an avowed champion of the New Learning. He was prominent in public theological disputes in the University, and was in 1520 converted by the teaching of Bilney. On Christmas Eve, 1525, he preached a sermon in St. Edward's Church which consisted of a bitter invective against the whole priestly order. For this he was brought before Wolsey, his secretary during his trial being no less a person than Miles Coverdale, who himself was resident in Cambridge. He gained the ear and the favour of the king, who employed him as an intermediary with the German Protestant powers, but he later on once more fell foul of authority and was burned at Smithfield in 1540. But while still in Cambridge he shared with Bilney the leadership of the reforming party.

A greater figure is Hugh Latimer, known chiefly as one of the bishops who suffered under Queen Mary. He was a Fellow of Clare, and says of himself in his early years: 'I was as obstinate a

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papist as any in England.' On one occasion, which proved memorable, he delivered a sermon devoted to a vigorous attack on the opinions of Melancthon. In the congregation was little Bilney, who thereupon sought him out, and begged him for God's sake to hear his confession. 'By it I learned more than before in many years. So from that time forward I began to smell the word of God, and forsook the school doctors and such fooleries.' This was in 1524.

He never was a professional theologian, and had no taste for merely academic discussion, but he was emphatically a preacher, and learned and unlearned alike flocked to hear him throughout the diocese. The bishop, Nicholas West, wishing to test for himself his heretical reputation, came once quietly into the church where he was to preach, but Latimer saw him, and promptly changed his subject to that of Christ as the pattern priest and bishop. His shafts went home, and he found himself forbidden to preach in the University or the diocese. He could not, however, be kept out of the pulpit in monastic churches, which were outside episcopal control, and Dr. Barnes accordingly made good use of him. It was in consequence of this that Barnes was found preaching in a town church the sermon referred to above.

Latimer, like Barnes, was summoned to appear before Wolsey, with the unexpected result that the Cardinal jeered at the ban imposed by the Bishop of Ely, and Latimer left with free permission to preach anywhere in the country. This evidently had to be construed as including his own diocese, and we find him in 1529 preaching violent sermons before the University, which raised such a storm that forcible measures against him were prevented only by a whisper in the king's ear that he was in favour of the divorce.

Moreover, in the next year he was one of twelve divines appointed from Cambridge to meet a similar number from Oxford to examine 'the mischievous books commonly read among the people'.

That he managed to retain favour as long as he did was, no doubt, due to his avoidance of theology as such and his adherence to the proclamation of the gospel of righteousness. But here he passes out of our picture, as the rest of his work lay elsewhere.

A still more notable product of the University was Thomas Cranmer, who, as a Fellow of Jesus, was recognized as one of the

leading theologians in the University. A chance remark of his that the divorce should be treated as a theological question came to the ears of the king, and that was the beginning of his exalted career. It was largely through his efforts, in conjunction with his later rival Gardiner, that opinion in Cambridge veered from hostility to Henry's case to approval.

These names are quite enough to show how powerful the reforming party was in Cambridge, and many more might be added. But it must not be imagined that they had it all their own way, or were even a majority. That was far from being the case. The leading officials—heads of colleges, the bishop, and dignitaries in general—were thoroughly conservative. Yet it is not possible to picture the University, any more than the country at large, as clearly divided into two camps. There were many questions at issue: the supremacy of the Pope or the king, the case for the royal divorce, the free study of the Bible, the various phases of reforming doctrine—on all these points there was diversity of opinion, and there were cross-divisions all along the line. Thus Stephen Gardiner stood out later as the protagonist against Cranmer, yet he was strongly in favour of the divorce. He is, however, scarcely to be reckoned among the leaders in Cambridge, for though he was Master of Trinity Hall from 1523 till 1549, he held innumerable other posts, including the bishopric of Winchester, and was seldom to be found in residence.

On the whole it may be said that the official attitude was pro-king and anti-heresy. So in 1530, when Henry took up Cranmer's idea of referring the divorce problem to the Universities, Cambridge, thanks, it may be, in part to a skilfully packed meeting, came down strongly on the king's side as against the Pope, so setting a lead which was reluctantly followed soon afterwards by Oxford. This was backed up later by a memorial to the king utterly renouncing the supremacy of the Pope.

But if this represents the higher ranks, the infection of 'heresy' was more widespread lower down the scale. So when Thomas Pernabie, afterwards Archdeacon of Ely, was being instituted as vicar of Cherry Hinton, he was expressly charged not to favour in any way Lutheran or other heresies which were condemned by the Church. Such a warning would not be given without good cause, and we may well imagine that it was given to all other new incumbents.

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One other indication may be adduced. In the course of a letter written by the Bishop of Norwich, in which his references are particularly to the writings of Tyndale which were now being eagerly read, and as eagerly attacked, he said: 'There is a College in Cambridge, called Gunwell Hall, of the foundation of a Bishop of Norwich. I hear of no clerk that hath come out lately of that College, but savoureth of the frying-pan, though he speak never so holily.'

Then again, as early as 1521 the taint of heresy was discovered, not this time in doctrine, but in a more outward and visible form, which doubtless was taken to denote false beliefs. The rector of Willingham, John Rumpayne, is found under sentence of excommunication — a rather drastic step in our eyes — for infringing the rule that no one may appear in the diocesan synod without a correct surplice. We are glad to note that he sought and obtained absolution.

A few years later, in 1528, a synod was held at Barnwell, resulting in a charge signed by representatives from Cambridge, Chester-ton, Shingay, Bourn, Barton and Camps. The first clause deals with a matter of law and order, for some irregularities were happening in regard to marriages, and it lays down that no layman from outside the diocese is to be married for a full year, a much longer qualification than is now required.

It then deals once more with the question of vestments. No curate, chaplain or priest may venture to celebrate Mass in indecent clothes — the exact words are 'Ruggid Gownes' — but properly clad.

Rectors and curates were in no way to use bibles according to the new interpretation. The reference, of course, is to Tyndale's version of the New Testament, which during the past two years had been printed abroad, and secretly smuggled into England in large numbers. But the study of the bible in its approved form was enjoined, for 'all pastors of souls and parish priests, when they have finished the recitation of their Office in their churches, shall apply themselves diligently to prayer and the reading of the Holy Scriptures, in order that they may be ready, as becomes their office, to satisfy anyone who asks for the reason of their faith and hope'.

The year 1535 was one of first-class importance for Cambridge. The great Thomas Cromwell became Chancellor of the University

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in succession to Bishop Fisher, and Thomas Goodrich became Bishop of Ely. And these appointments coincided with the next outstanding event in the country, the first move towards the Dissolution of the monasteries, for which Cromwell also was made Visitor-General. He was already the king's Vicar-General, so that his powers were almost unlimited.

In this last capacity he issued his famous injunctions, ordering a bible to be set up in every church, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments to be read in English, and a sermon to be preached by every incumbent at least once a quarter. The clergy were also to expound the articles necessary for salvation: they were to discourage the 'superstitious holidays', and pilgrimages; they were not to extol images, relics or miracles. There is a grim irony about the resemblance of these injunctions to the substance of little Bilney's preaching for which he suffered martyrdom only a few years before.

As Chancellor of the University Cromwell had other and less drastic injunctions to propound, requiring daily public lectures in Latin and Greek; permitting all students to read the Scriptures privately; and prohibiting the public reading or teaching of the old Canon Law. Neither Fellowships nor scholarships were to be sold; and all charters and statutes were to be submitted to him with a full list of rentals and inventories of all property. All heads of houses, scholars, and students were to be present at a Mass in St. Mary's for the happy state of the King and Queen Anne. He also sent 'men of fresh and free wit' round the countryside to laugh down the old superstitions.

With one definite abuse he took strong measures. He found that the University was largely peopled by middle-aged clergymen, who flocked there, ostensibly to study for degrees, but actually to pass the time gossiping at the Dolphin, the Bull or the White Horse, and so encroach on the relief and maintenance of poor scholars, whom they tended to crowd out. Cromwell enjoined that every student should give full evidence of following a definite course.

But his greatest work was the demolition of the monasteries. In this he was powerfully abetted by Bishop Goodrich, who was an unscrupulous agent of the king. He began his career as bishop by enjoining Masters and Fellows of Colleges to preach in parish churches, and to set forth the king's style of Supreme Head of the Church of England, and utterly to renounce the Pope.

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The ultimate necessity for the suppression cannot be discussed here, but it may be mentioned that the ruthlessness with which it was carried out brought widespread distress. It is true that the monks were as a rule pensioned off, but the multitude of minor dependants, servants and employes of all sorts were certainly left in a sorry plight. They were left to wander in search of a livelihood, and were then liable to be arrested as vagabonds, branded, imprisoned and even hanged.

Cambridge had an early visit from the two men who had been appointed commissioners to examine and report on the state of monasteries up and down the country, Dr. Legh and Thomas Ap Rice. Legh declared that the Injunctions, by which he presumably meant those issued to the country, not to the University, were approved by the whole University 'except three or four Pharisaical Pharisees'. And Ap Rice wrote: 'We are now at Cambridge, where I observed in the Heads great pertinacity in their old blindness. If they were gradually removed, learning would flourish here, as the younger sort be of much towardness.'

These reports show some discrepancy, but it may be that the Heads of whom Ap Rice spoke were watered down to the two or three contumacious Pharisees of Dr. Legh, whose attitude towards them was mildly contemptuous.

The report on the monasteries was damning: all were in disorder, and immorality was rife. At Swaffham 'my lady there [i.e. presumably the prioress] gave a benefice appropriated to the house to a friar whom they say she loves well'. 'At Denny we found half a dozen who with tears in their eyes begged to be dismissed, among them a young woman married to one Reynell, a merchant of London, with whom she had four children.'

These are two specimens of the commissioners' findings, and are representative of the reports from all over the country, not in Cambridgeshire alone. It can never now be known to what extent they were really justified. Abuses could have been found at all periods, and moral scandals. It may be asked whether things were much worse now than previously. Perhaps they were. But one fact is certain, that Henry was determined to dissolve the houses, and that for two main reasons. First, they remained as an unpleasant relic of obedience to the Pope, and secondly, he wanted their endowments. And if Dr. Legh and Mr. Ap Rice had not produced the required reports, others would have been found who

would. Also there are ugly stories of Legh setting out to seduce nuns — a veritable *agent provocateur*.

Latimer very shrewdly expressed in no measured terms his indignation at the promotion of abbots who had been accused of immorality to bishoprics to save the pensions which otherwise would have to be found for them. Possibly he intended to hint that the charges had been grossly exaggerated, but at any rate he put the king on the horns of a dilemma — either these abbots had been unjustifiably thrown out, or they certainly should have been excluded from all spiritual office.

Whatever the true state of affairs, the smaller monasteries were marked down for dissolution, to be followed a few years later by the greater ones. Again one may ask whether it is on the face of it likely that immorality should be confined in 1535 to those houses that had twelve or fewer inmates, and that, with this warning in front of them, the others should be infected three years later.

At the same time earlier investigations by bishops had brought seamy things to light. Some five or six years before the commission Bishop West, of Ely, had written to Wolsey that he had visited the monastery at Ely, and but for his intervention it could not have continued at all for many more years.

Perhaps the case of Ramsey, though then outside the diocese, may be quoted as typical. In 1521 the Bishop of Lincoln had visited the abbey, and found thirty monks there, besides ten in the cell of St. Ives. There was, he said, no glaring depravity as there had been at Ramsey sixty years before, but there was gross neglect, and the whole place was dilapidated. St. Ives was in worse condition. There was great slackness at divine service. The elder monks left all duties to the younger. Several of them spent their time hunting and shooting, playing with dice and gambling, swearing heavily the while. The behaviour at St. Ives was the talk of the neighbourhood.

So the monastery at Anglesey, St. Edmund's Priory at Cambridge, and the nunneries at Chatteris and Swaffham, and a little later that at Denny, disappeared from the map. This seems a small number, but it must be remembered that a great many had died a natural death in the course of the preceding century.

The story of Thorney has special interest.¹ The last of its forty

¹ Rev. F. H. Lacey, *A Short History of Thorney Abbey*.

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abbots, Robert Blyth, who was also Bishop of Down and Connor, surrendered the abbey, and received a pension of £200 a year for life, a considerable sum in those days, while the nineteen monks received smaller sums.

After the monks had been driven out, the place was stripped, the lead off the roof going first, to be melted down. Soon afterwards the roof and central tower fell. The land and part of the possessions were granted ten years later by Edward VI to the Earl of Bedford, who carried on the work of destruction, and granted forty tons of squared stone to Trinity College, Cambridge, and one hundred and forty-six tons for building the new chapel of Corpus Christi College.

The place being left to itself, the drains and dykes became blocked up and the land reverted to marshes. How restoration ultimately came will be told in Chapter XII.

The attitude of Bishop Goodrich may be deduced from his report to Cromwell when Ely was visited: 'Dr. Legh had visited here, and has behaved discreetly as he did at Cambridge.'

The king had by this time finally abolished the jurisdiction of Rome and the Pope in the country, but still felt no leniency towards those he deemed to be heretics. His definition of the term must have been somewhat difficult to follow, as it was, in effect, disagreement with his own views, which were sadly apt to vary from one year to another. Two cases of official wrath descending on offenders may be quoted.

The first is that of the vicar of All Hallows, Cambridge, who ministered to part of the parishioners the Holy Sacrament in one kind, after the old custom, but then 'to the great offence both of lay and learned, went to the Altar, and said words of consecration in the mother tongue, and ministered in both kinds. Some would not receive it, and went elsewhere'.

Then the vicar of Caxton, after ministering the very body of Christ, gave them ale to drink instead of wine on Easter Day. What the explanation of this strange act is, is obscure. It probably means that the vicar determined to keep the letter of the law by not administering wine, but wished to show his protest by giving another form of drink.

A second visitation of the monasteries followed in 1538, aimed at the few remaining larger houses. Legh was afraid that the monks might anticipate his action by disposing of their property

before he could lay hands on it, and therefore hastened to assure the Prior of Barnwell that his house was in no danger. His plan succeeded, and Barnwell lived on in a false security, but only for ten months, after which it went the way of the others. Crowland, Ely, Fordham, Ramsey, Thorney, fell at the same time, and a year or two later the Preceptories of the Knights of St. John at Chippenham and Wilbraham. —

The fate of Ely was somewhat different from that of the others, as by letters patent the priory of St. Peter and St. Etheldreda was reconstituted as the Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity, with an establishment consisting of one dean and eight priests prebendary. The whole site of the monastery was handed over, together with all manors, which were numerous and scattered about in several counties, the rectories belonging to the monastery, and all property in Ely and elsewhere. The new Cathedral body, accordingly, started out with excellent endowments. —

Not only were the monastic establishments dissolved, but their fine buildings were razed to the ground. The work was thoroughly carried out, and Cambridge colleges vied with one another in demolishing them, and taking the stone for their own purposes. Thorney, Chatteris, Shingay, were left with literally not one stone upon another, while only Denny survived.

The next step was the order in 1541 to destroy all images, shrines and ornaments of all sorts. Every figure in the beautiful Lady Chapel of Ely Cathedral was hammered and chipped deliberately, so as to be unrecognizable. Visitors to-day who crowd to see the admirable restoration of the chapel, carried out a very few years ago, can imagine for themselves its splendour before this act of vandalism. It was at this time also that the fragments of the beautiful alabaster reredos at Toft were buried. The full catalogue of destruction would be of infinite length. The colleges themselves, after a period of anxious suspense, escaped, thanks, no doubt, to the orthodox loyalty preserved towards the king, together with some judicious bribery.

Commissioners were appointed also to confiscate the valuables of parish churches, but such was the character of the men that we are not surprised to learn that little of the spoils ever reached the Crown. These were swollen to a vast extent by the suppression of all chantries, with their multitudinous endowments. This act

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carried much distress in its train, for chantries were used, not only for their original purpose of commemorating the departed benefactors, but for teaching children to read, assisting the poor, tending the sick, and countless other works of charity. It is said that up to this time literacy was more common among the labouring classes than it was for centuries afterwards, and that the dispersal of the chantry priests caused a serious setback. Altogether it was as though all local Benefit Societies, schools, almshouses, were swept away, with a chaotic overthrow of simple reverence and religion.

Nevertheless, there were no revolts in Cambridgeshire, as there were elsewhere, as, notwithstanding the general conservatism, the Protestant leaven was already working, and the prime object, if not the methods employed, found sympathy even in the country districts.

Once more there was anxiety in the colleges, as the Act of 1545 enabled the king to dissolve not only chantries but colleges. A special commission was set up to report on the matter after making another survey of the estate and possessions of all the colleges. Their report saved the situation if, indeed, the danger had ever been a real one.

The king went further. These years had seen a grievous falling off in the number of students in the University. The loss of the monasteries, to life in which so many had previously looked forward, together with the general upheaval and lack of security, went far towards emptying the colleges. As Fuller puts it: 'On the fall of the abbeys fell the hearts of all scholars, fearing the ruin of learning.' So far, then, from sanctioning the abolition of the colleges, as many, rightly or wrongly, feared, the king acted in precisely the opposite manner, and, in the hope of restoring confidence as far as might be, founded what was destined to become the greatest college of all, namely Trinity. For this Michaelhouse and King's Hall, beside a number of smaller hostels, were surrendered to him, parts of the two Halls being used in the construction of the famous Great Court.

One member of the commission that saved Cambridge was Matthew Parker, Master of Corpus. He has already come into the story as one of Bilney's early associates, and his great fame came later, when he was induced by Queen Elizabeth to accept the Archbishopric of Canterbury. But the central part of his life

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was spent at Cambridge, and it was there that he became marked out as the obvious leader for the Church. He was one of the scholars (as was also Cranmer) whom Wolsey wished to transplant to his new foundation at Oxford, but he refused. He came under royal notice, and was made chaplain to the king in 1537. The next year he was threatened with prosecution because of his reforming sympathies. It was, however, reported to Cromwell that Parker 'hath ever been of a good judgment, and set forth the word of God after a good manner. For this he suffers some grudge' — meaning that other folk bore a grudge against him.

When Ely Cathedral was reconstituted, he was one of the first prebendaries. Subsequently he was made Dean of Lincoln, an office which he held together with his Mastership of Corpus. He was ejected from both places under Queen Mary, but contrived to live quietly in the country during her reign, and was restored on Elizabeth's accession, to be raised to the Archbishopric the following year.

This is anticipating our story, as in his later years he had no direct contact with Cambridge, though the memory of his life and work there must have contributed to make his influence felt to the end of his career.

A natural sequel to the spoliation of chantries was that of the closely connected obits. One William Gazeley was chosen to carry this out in 1547. Before he had got well to work the king died, but the accession of Edward only gave further impetus to the final removal of anything that could be construed as savouring of popery.

He found extensive endowments to deal with. The Bassingbourne Brotherhood, for instance, owned two hundred acres of land and half an acre of orchard. At Haslingfield the two fourteenth-century chantries and Gilds each had a separate manor house, and one had a chapel standing in the churchyard. The provision of obits was one of the standing charges on these chantries. Everything here, including the great tithes, was bought by the king's physician, Dr. Thomas Wendy, with the result that the sole ecclesiastical revenue, including the vicar's stipend, depended on his whim.

On the whole Gazeley carried out his work very inefficiently, as several obits still existed in Mary's reign.

By this time the earlier stage of the Reformation in England,

which was concerned with the domination of Rome, with doctrine coming in only in a secondary manner, was over, and England was deeply involved in the controversy about the sacrament of the altar, which had rent the Protestants of Germany asunder. Popular discussion descended to depths which reached actual blasphemy. Phrases like 'Jack-in-the-Box' were bandied about. 'Hoc est Corpus meum' ('This is my Body') was condensed into 'Hocus-Pocus'. But it need hardly be said that such pamphleteering extremes disgusted the responsible leaders on both sides.

Meantime the state of things in the University was lamentable, passing from bad to worse, and that as the result of the general chaos in the country. It is vigorously exhibited by a sermon preached before the king by Thomas Lever, a prominent Cambridge divine. He declared that lands had been snatched from abbeys, colleges and chantries, only to enrich the agents and not the king. Encloistered papists were sent abroad from the monasteries, and were given pensions, or, in lieu of them, valuable livings, as in the reign of Henry. Grammar Schools were, indeed, erected, but at the expense of much charitable provision for the poor, 'to the great slander of you and your laws, to the utter discomfort of the poor, and to the grievous offence of the people, to the most miserable drowning of youth in ignorance, and for decay of the University'. As for the University, its colleges were ravaged of their treasures, and their endowments misapplied. Formerly there were '200 students of divinity, many very well learned, which be now all clean gone. A hundred also of another sort, richer, living in Ostles and Inns, be either gone away or else fain to creep into Colleges and put poor men from their bare living'. He tells how clever men rose at four for devotion and common chapel, then for private study and common lectures, and at ten they went to dinner, 'where they be content with a penny piece of meat between four, having a few porage made of the broth of the same beef, with salt and oatmeal and nothing else'. Then they teach or learn till five, after which till nine or ten, there being no fire, they are 'fain to walk or run up and down for half an hour to get a heat on their feet till they go to bed'.

Latimer was also eloquent about the way in which poor and zealous students were driven away for lack of maintenance. 'There be few that study divinity, but so many as must of necessity furnish the colleges, for their livings be so small and victuals so

dear that they tarry not there, but go everywhere to seek livings, and so they go about.'

At the beginning of the new reign preaching had been inhibited by the Protector, Somerset. But shortly afterwards letters were sent to the Bishops of Durham and Ely calling on them to appoint chaplains and vicars and curates to preach as by their discretions they shall think meet, the proclamations and restraints notwithstanding. Goodrich would certainly not fail to avail himself of this and to 'let loose many of the tongues of the kind favoured now'.

At the same time one prominent Cambridge man, Andrew Perne, of whom more will be heard in the sequel, was one of six chaplains appointed to preach the doctrines of the Reformation up and down the country. He is described as tolerant and humane, aiming at general happiness, rather than any particular doctrine in theology. This is doubtless a just summary of his character, and should be borne in mind when his later vagaries come under discussion.

In 1550 a great stir was caused by a public disputation in Cambridge between Bucer and John Young. Young was an avowed papist, though subscribing to the prescribed oaths, which enabled him to retain his Fellowship at Pembroke.

Bucer was an eminent German theologian, who had come to England with his friend Fagius at the invitation of Cranmer. They both settled in Cambridge, but Fagius died soon afterwards, leaving Bucer to become Regius Professor of Divinity. At the request of Bishop Goodrich he produced a pamphlet dealing with the points of doctrine at issue in preparation for the revised edition of the Prayer Book, which ultimately came out in 1552, the famous Second Prayer Book of Edward VI. In particular he was at pains to ensure that no traces of the doctrine of transubstantiation, or anything that might be construed as reminiscent of it, should remain.

His controversy with Young raged round the much disputed question of works done before justification, which Bucer, following Calvin, maintained were not pleasing to God, but were of the nature of sin. There can be no doubt which of the two was declared to prevail in the argument.

He did not survive his friend Fagius for long, but died in 1551, a year before the publication of the Prayer Book.

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It is an unfortunate necessity that in times of critical change like these the limelight should be thrown on the bitterness of controversy and on the discordant noises of the more turbulent partisans, and that little is recorded of the growth of quiet piety and genuine conviction. At the same time it cannot be disputed that the prevalent tone of the clergy and of the whole Church at the end of Edward's reign was not far short of deplorable.

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THE drastic alterations enforced by the extreme reformers were one factor, if not the principal one, in bringing about open revolt in some parts of the country, but in Cambridgeshire the new leaven was working steadily, and the changes, though distasteful to many, were on the whole accepted. Hence, when Mary came to the throne, the district was far from being in sympathy with her. In fact when Lady Jane Grey was proclaimed queen, and Mary raced to Norfolk to rally her forces, she found it advisable to avoid passing through this county.

There was, however, but little persecution, though some compulsion was brought to bear on the churches. Perne, who retained his two offices of Master of Peterhouse and Dean of Ely, exercised a moderating influence, and, according to Fuller, he 'quenched the fire of persecution, or rather suffered it not to arise'.

But Sandys, the Vice-Chancellor, was arrested and sent to London, whence he managed to escape abroad. Gardiner was restored to the office in his place. At the same time almost all the other heads of colleges were deposed, one of them, Madew, of Clare, on the ground that he was married. John Young was made Master of Pembroke, and at once began to celebrate Mass in his college chapel. This brought Mr. Garth, Fellow of Peterhouse, into trouble, because he refused to allow one of his boys to assist in Pembroke.

At King's also the Roman Service was immediately adopted in its entirety. An order was issued that the English Service should be discontinued by a certain date in December, and the Round Church, to take one instance, conformed six weeks in advance.

The bodies of the continental reformers, Bucer and Fagius, were exhumed and burned on Market Hill, to the accompaniment of a suitable sermon by Perne.

It is clear that among the parishes of the diocese there was considerable reluctance to conform, for Archdeacon Pernabie at his first charge in the new reign, which he delivered at Hinton in 1554, gave orders to 'present all such as did disturb the queen's proceedings, in letting [hindering] the Latine Service, the setting up of

altars, and saying of masse or any part thereof'. And in this year and the next thirty-five incumbents were deprived, with three more a little later. There may well have been more than this, as the list is probably incomplete.

Three instances only are recorded of men who suffered the extreme penalty. John Hullier, Fellow of King's and vicar of Babraham, 'an excellent devout man, and zealous preacher of the Gospel in the dioceses of Norwich and Ely' was 'cited before a great rout of Popish Doctors, and especially Dr. Shaxton', and burned on Jesus Green.

This Shaxton had thirty years before been one of Bilney's associates, and had suffered much for his faith. He had been imprisoned with Latimer in 1539 for his opposition to the Six Articles, but seven years later had abjured. Now in Mary's reign we find him Suffragan to the Bishop of Ely, and a strong supporter of the Catholic side.

Two other men, unnamed, were burned at Ely for calling the sacrament of the altar an idol.

Bishop Goodrich, one of the most ardent reformers, conveniently died early in the reign, and so avoided being deposed. Yet the fact remains that he found it consistent with his conscience to submit to Queen Mary after having acted as we have seen under her two predecessors.

The verdicts pronounced on him are instructive, if only in illustration of the influence exerted on presumably honest opinion by the point of view that lurks in the background. First, he was a man, 'if happily able to discharge this Place [as bishop], assuredly no more. It is agreeable to his ordinary practice to make very ill representations of his clergy, especially such as favoured the Gospel'. Secondly, by the Bishop of Sarum, 'he was a busy, secular-spirited man, and gave himself up wholly to faction and intrigues of State, and, though his opinions always leaned to the Reformation, it was no wonder if a man so tempered would prefer the keeping of his bishopric [under Queen Mary] to the discharge of his conscience'. And thirdly, the historian Strype sums him up as 'gentle to his enemies, but somewhat harsh to his friends and dependants. Under him the Reformation succeeded well'.

He was succeeded by Thomas Thirlby, a native of Cambridge, who had been consecrated in the reign of Henry VIII as Bishop of Westminster, the first and last occupant of that see. In 1550 he

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was translated to Norwich, where he served King Edward faithfully, although he disliked the religious changes. Then after the accession of Mary he was sent to Ely.

It fell to him to take part in the trial and condemnation of Cranmer, though for his own part he never took stern measures against heretics. Under Elizabeth he refused to take the Oath of Supremacy, and was in consequence deposed, after which he lived in honourable confinement till his death in 1570.

Fuller says of him that his vice was rather prodigality than cruelty, for he wept at Archbishop Cranmer's degradation. After the death of Queen Mary he was as violent in his opinion, but not so violent in his expressions. He never used invective against Elizabeth.

The accession of Elizabeth, like that of her sister, brought speedy changes in Cambridge. Two important Acts were passed by her first Parliament, the Act of Supremacy and the Act of Uniformity, and these indicate the directions from which opposition came. On the one hand, there were the Popish Recusants, who saw little or no difference between the new title of Supreme Governor of the Church in England, and the old one chosen by Henry of Supreme Head. And on the other there were the more extreme Protestants, who were galvanized into activity by the flood of refugees who poured back from the continent and from Geneva in particular.

Among the former were the great majority of the Marian bishops, and these were quickly deposed, including Thirlby of Ely, mentioned above, who had made a valiant, but unavailing, attempt to oppose the Supremacy Act in the House of Lords, showing that he had the courage of his convictions.

In the University similar drastic methods were taken with the heads of houses, eleven out of the thirteen having to go. The two survivors were Dr. Caius and Andrew Perne. Caius was Master of Gonville Hall, to which, in consequence of his great benefactions, he was allowed to add his own name. He was not a clergyman, but a medical doctor of considerable fame, and was little interested in the niceties of theology. In fact he was some years later accused of being an atheist, a charge from which he was without much difficulty able to clear himself.

Perne was a different man altogether, an excellent forerunner of the famous Vicar of Bray of the next century. He had, as we have seen, been found very useful as a propagandist by King Edward,

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had conformed to Queen Mary, who promoted him to be Master of Peterhouse, and now, as readily, conformed again in the new reign. He not only retained his Mastership, but was soon given the Deanery of Ely, an office which he combined with his duties at Peterhouse for a score of years.

Strange though it may seem, it was comparatively few only in whom religious conviction attained to the stern resoluteness of the later Puritans. And it may well be that among people of less exalted position than Perne the bulk were ready to follow the lead given to them rather than make themselves martyrs for doctrines of which they could for their own part give but a hazy explanation.

The new bishop was Richard Cox, a man with marked leanings to Protestantism, which he proceeded to exhibit in no uncertain manner. Some of his predecessors would have found their loyalty strained at the outset, as on the deprivation of Thirlby the queen seized all the revenues of the diocese, and handed them on to Cox seriously depleted. But from all accounts they could well stand that, and were still sufficient to enable the new bishop to retain much of the old splendour. In any case, a little judicious pressure from the queen decided him to accept the position.

He was one of the returned exiles, and had spent the last few years at Frankfort, where he came into conflict with Knox and other extremists over the disputed use of the Prayer Book. He won his way, and the book of 1552 was duly adopted by the English community there.

After his return he wrote to the Pastor at Worms; he declared that Papists had become so hardened in Queen Mary's five years' government that it was exceedingly difficult for the queen and those that stood for the truth to get room for the sincere religion of Christ. But exiles were allowed to preach before the queen, and at length many of the nobility and multitudes of the common people turned from Popery, but of the clergy none at all, standing stiff as a rock.

He himself refused to minister in the queen's chapel, excusing himself by saying: 'In the trembling fear of God, in the bond of duty towards your Highness, in the zeal of God's truth, which burdeneth and bindeth my conscience, I most humbly sue unto your like godly zeal, prostrate and with wet eyes, that ye will vouchsafe to peruse the considerations which move that I dare not

minister in your Grace's chapel, the Lights and Cross remaining.'

His zeal found one lamentable outlet, for he is charged with the destruction of the University Library, with its priceless collection of manuscripts, on the ground that the illustrations in these were idolatrous — an appalling act of vandalism.

In the diocese at large his first step was to hold a visitation, to ensure the removal of all popish emblems and the due observance of the new order. We have, accordingly, a mass of evidence on the attitude of the ordinary parish three years after the death of Mary. It shows a widespread reluctance to destroy holy water stoups, or to daub the walls of churches with whitewash to obliterate the popish pictures. In many churches also he found sad negligence in the provision of Anglican church books. The prescribed homilies were often not to be seen. Frequently there was no bible. Stanton St. Michael had no pulpit. In Orwell the Crucifix was still standing. St. Botolph, Cambridge, had no chalice. Irregularities, in fact, were legion.

It may be mentioned in passing that the church accounts at March provide interesting material for a précis of all the recent changes. Under Henry VIII there appear items for the usual upkeep of the church and services. In 1550 there is a sum for breaking down the altar and removing the stones, and about the same time another for pulling down images. Then in 1553, on the accession of Queen Mary, there comes the provision of a high altar and the new communion book. After Mary's death the altar was again removed and replaced by a communion table, and two years later there is a payment for destroying the rood loft and organ. This may be taken as typical of the succession of events in most parish churches.

An interesting figure in the diocese at this time is the Rev. Edward Leeds, LL.D., M.A., not so much for his character, as little is recorded about that, but rather as illustrating the ease with which benefices were still held in plurality and in absence.

He is said to have been originally a monk of Ely, but that is uncertain. Though he is described later in Bishop Cox's Certificates as a deacon, he appears in 1548 as rector of Little Gransden, and a prebendary of the cathedral. He was a Commissary of Bishop Goodrich at his episcopal visitation in 1550, when he enjoined all rectors, vicars and churchwardens to destroy all altars in a number of parishes before the coming Christmas. The

next year he was rector of Elm and Emneth, and also master of the Chapel of St. Mary-in-the-Sea at Newton.

On the accession of Queen Mary he resigned most of his offices, retaining Gransden as a kind of pension, apparently because he was not disposed to conform to the change. Later he became Master of the Hospital of St. John in Cambridge, where he resided for the most part, and was subsequently elected Master of Clare.

He acted as chaplain to Archbishop Parker at his enthronement in 1559, who then appointed him one of his Visitors in the dioceses of Canterbury, Ely and Peterborough.

Before 1560 he is found to be rector of Cottenham and of Littleport, and a few years later of Crofton. But he made his home chiefly in London, and secondly at Cottenham. More than this, he was precentor of Lichfield, and was granted a dispensation for adding the rectory of Snailwell to his list. He died at Croxton in 1589.

Returning to Bishop Cox, three years after his first visitation he held a second, which showed that by this time the defacement of churches had been generally carried out. But, on the other hand, the evidence he collected went to suggest that the moral condition of the people had by no means improved. The old sanctions had gone, and the restraining hand found nothing to replace it.

Just as Cambridge was the cradle in England of the Reformation, so it was of Nonconformity and of Separatism. These two, so far from Geneva or other places of refuge on the continent, had, during the first half of Elizabeth's reign, no thought of leaving the Established Church and setting up separate 'denominations'. Cox, for one, as we have seen, fought strenuously to retain the Prayer Book during his exile, and, what is more, he found sufficient support to enable him to do so. The early Puritans were strongly opposed to the Act of Uniformity, to which they refused to 'conform', or did so with great reluctance. But their avowed object was to reform the Church still further from within, as they regarded themselves as staunch members of it.

Cox must accordingly have been a congenial bishop to most of his flock, not that he had any qualms about conformity himself, but his leanings were all on the Puritan side, so that they would meet with gentle treatment at his hands.

The struggle came outwardly to a head in connection with what seems to us the comparatively trivial matter of the use of the sur-

plice. But that was in fact just the outward and visible sign of the more weighty controversy, in which the protagonists, not only in Cambridge, but in the whole country, were two prominent leaders in the University: Thomas Cartwright on the one side, and John Whitgift on the other.

If we are inclined to condemn the anti-surplice demonstration as somewhat childish, we may remember that in very modern days bitter controversy has raged round the use of Eucharistic vestments, altar candles, and such like. The reason for this is that these ornaments have been interpreted as indicative of certain forms of doctrine, which has been clearly implied by their use. Precisely the same was the case in the sixteenth century, when every kind of outward dress was regarded as reminiscent, to say the least, of the unreformed Church, and, as such, to condemn the wearers. The surplice was the commonest vestment, as not only were officiating clergy called upon to wear it, but all members of colleges. Even the academic dress of gown and square cap came under condemnation.

The most advertised demonstration was that which broke out in the University, and affected the whole of St. John's College and most of Trinity. In St. John's in 1565 three hundred of the Fellows and students appeared in the college chapel without the hated vestment, in the absence, apparently intentional, of Dr. Longworth, the Master. Some irregular diversity in the manner of administration of the Holy Communion was also reported.

This action amounted to a practical declaration of war on the subject of vestments, and Cecil wrote a vigorous letter to the Vice-Chancellor denouncing it as a 'manifest invading of the authority of the Prince by a willing breaking of Common Order in the University, and a leud leprosy of libertines, riotous shaking off of the yoke of Obedience and Order'.

The Vice-Chancellor replied by a plaintive letter, asking if he could deprive a man for not wearing a surplice, and complaining also about the disorderly behaviour of one Fulke and others, 'making Robin Hooode's pennyworthes of their vestments'.

Cecil then summoned Longworth and Fulke to London to account for their conduct, and Longworth duly submitted to his authority. He also wrote to the Bishop of Ely, as the Visitor of St. John's, instructing him to take any necessary action.

King's College meantime remained quiet, and one of the Fel-

lows, Bartholomew Clark, wrote to Cecil deriding all the agitators. He said that in one college a man lately came to the Quire and placed himself among the thickest of the rest of the company, all with their surplices on, but he alone without one. The offender laid the cause on his conscience, 'when at length the true cause was known to be that he had pawned his surplice to a Cook with whom he had run in debt for his Belly'.

The storm of the Whitgift-Cartwright controversy burst a few years later. Cartwright was a Fellow first of St. John's and afterwards of Trinity. He comes first into the limelight in 1564, when the queen spent five days in Cambridge, where, among other forms of entertainment provided for her, a public disputation on theological matters was held, the chief speakers being Cartwright and one John Preston. The subject of discussion was somewhat technical, dealing with shades of opinion which need not detain us. But the queen's verdict was in favour of Preston, whom she covered with honours and rewards. It was commonly said afterwards by Cartwright's detractors that he was so disgruntled in consequence that he embarked from that time on a studied attack on the official Church policy. This may be discounted as approaching a libel, but the fact remains that he did launch out soon afterwards on his bitter attack on the whole constitution of the English Church.

After a short absence in Ireland he was made in 1569 Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity in Cambridge, and in that position he had every chance to promulgate his ideas. He attacked the whole system of episcopal government, claiming that it was at variance with the methods of the primitive Church. In this he was undoubtedly helped by the many abuses that existed, in the matter of patronage specially. Unworthy men were promoted to incumbencies and higher offices, and for unworthy motives. And in the matter of Church discipline there was much ground for complaint. What he demanded was a form of Presbyterianism, a true democracy, by which under some central control each congregation should have a say in the appointment of its own minister.

But he never contemplated any separation between Church and State. Discipline was a prominent feature of the Geneva policy, and had the national Presbyterianism that Cartwright wanted been introduced, he would doubtless have insisted on complete conformity from all.

Whitgift was also educated at Cambridge, and was a member of various colleges in turn. For a short time he was rector of Teversham, and then in 1563 was appointed to the same professorship that Cartwright afterwards held. Here he at once gained fame and the approval of the authorities, so that in 1566 he was promoted to be Master of Trinity. It was therefore with one of his own Fellows that he joined battle.

He was not slow to realize that Cartwright's contentions, as is clear enough to us now looking back, must logically mean the abolition of episcopacy root and branch, and a final break with the historic Church, which could not fail to involve exactly that split which Cartwright disowned.

That Whitgift was, at any rate thus early, no extremist is shown by a letter he wrote to Cecil, in which, after acknowledging his singular goodness in placing him in Trinity College, he goes on to repel a charge of encouraging Nonconformity, 'but it grieveth me that any man should cease from preaching because of things indifferent'. He certainly was a disciplinarian, and as Archbishop of Canterbury (1583-1604) he was able to use his high position to stem the rising tide in favour of Puritanism. His influence in this diocese was particularly strong, not only because of his long connection with Cambridge, but also because after Bishop Cox's death in 1581 no successor was appointed for nineteen years, so that the diocese was directly under the Archbishop's control.

There were two main points at issue between the Anglicans and the Puritans: discipline or order, and doctrine. For the greater part of Elizabeth's reign it was almost exclusively the former that formed the battleground. Archbishop Parker, Whitgift, Cartwright and other leaders on either side were in essential agreement on doctrine. We shall find instances of men getting into trouble in Cambridge for preaching against Calvinism, just as others did for attacking episcopacy, and accusations of Popery were easily trumped up. Only in the last dozen or fifteen years of the reign did doctrine come openly into the arena. This should always be borne in mind in the discussion of Cartwright's career and its immediate sequel in Cambridge.

Calvinistic doctrines had spread so rapidly in almost all the colleges, as well as in the country parts, that it was said that such of the students as were not keen devotees of the party were given up to dissipation and to indulgence in 'town and gown rows'.

Unfortunately the Calvinists on their part resorted to regrettable practices, evolving a mania for destroying any painted windows that still remained, and monuments that bore inscriptions with prayers for the dead or other signs of popery.

One of the worst acts of vandalism was the destruction of the magnificent rood loft in Great St. Mary's, which had been built only forty years before. How roughly it was done may be indicated by the payments made, which include — item, to carpenters, 3s. 4d., and for mending the seats which were damaged in the course of the work, 2s. 1d.

Shortly afterwards an order was issued to destroy all inscriptions in the windows of schools, as well as churches, relating to prayers for the dead, 'whereupon followed a great destruction of them, and the danger of a greater by some zealots'. This order was introduced in the Senate of the University by George Withers, of Corpus, who also drew up articles condemning the square cap and surplice.

The struggle, then, between Cartwright and Whitgift waxed fast and furious. Of the two men Whitgift is said to have been the superior as a scholar and theologian, and also in the control of his temper, while Cartwright was essentially the popular preacher, drawing crowds after him, the darling of Cambridge. Ten years after his enforced withdrawal from the University, he was allowed to return on one occasion, and preached in Great St. Mary's. Such was the excitement at his reappearance that, in the absence of microphones and loud speakers, the windows of the church were actually taken out, so that the people massed outside might have some chance of hearing him.

Feeling accordingly ran high when the time came for Whitgift to take action against him, while he was still resident and a professor. An official vote refused him his degree of Doctor of Divinity; he was deprived of his professorship, and even of his Fellowship. Thereupon he retired to Geneva for a short time, but soon returned, and had hopes of becoming Professor of Hebrew. But this was peremptorily denied him because of his open support of the famous Admonition to Parliament. He was at first supposed to be the author of the document, which was published under strict anonymity, but it was traced to two London clergymen, who were sent to prison for their pains.

The full title of this Admonition (1572) was: 'A view of Popish Abuses yet remaining in the English Church', and it set out to

enunciate in detail the now familiar causes for complaint against the established ministry and discipline, demanding a radical change. But it contained also passages describing the archbishop's court as 'the filthy quave-mire and poisoned plash of all the abominations that do infect the whole realm'.

What exasperated the authorities was doubtless not so much the actual wording of the petition, for that was well in keeping with the manners of the times, as the tremendous effect that it had throughout the country, helping on the Puritan cause as nothing previously had done.

The Admonition was never actually presented to Parliament, but it was widely circulated, despite a peremptory order from the queen herself that anyone possessing a copy should surrender it within twenty days. So tremendous was its effect that a champion was sought to issue an official reply, and he was found in the Master of Trinity, Whitgift. That again called forth 'A reply to the Answer to the Admonition', a voluminous document, this time by Cartwright himself.

He dealt once more with the same topics, the authority of the Church to order anything not expressly laid down in Scripture, the whole system of Church government, the Prayer Book services, and, not least, the barren subject of clerical vestments.

Cartwright was now in danger of arrest, and in consequence retired again to the continent. His career in Cambridge was closed, but his influence there was not. He did once return to the town for a short visit, on the occasion of his sermon referred to above. He died in 1603.

As an attempt to meet the strongly flowing tide a set of Articles was drawn up in 1571 in the parish church of Elsworth, to which all priests in the diocese were to subscribe. The chief purport is given in these two sentences: 'The Book of Common Prayer containeth in it nothing repugnant to the Word of God . . . Apparel ordained by law is not wicked, but tollerable, and to be used obedientlie for order and cumlines only.'

The document was signed by three men of note in the diocese, Andrew Perne, Dean of Ely, John Parker, Archdeacon of Ely (brother of the more famous Matthew, Archbishop of Canterbury at the time), and John Whitgift, parson of Teversham. How successful the demand for subscription was we do not know.

In the years that followed Whitgift's attitude stiffened. He no

longer needed to defend himself against a charge of sympathizing with the Puritans, and after he left Cambridge, to become Bishop of Worcester for a few years, and then in 1583 Archbishop of Canterbury, he came to be regarded as an inflexible champion of the Established Church and all that it stood for.

Other Fellows of his college were deprived besides Cartwright, and two were even put in prison. Peterhouse and Christ's are mentioned as losing at least one man each, and many others, scattered about the diocese, were prosecuted.

In 1585 complaints were made that 'Sundays were much profaned in Riot and Intemperance, chiefly caused by Interludes and Sports, practised on the Eve of those days and the afternoons also'. This gave the text to a notorious sermon by John Smith, demanding that the Christian Sabbath be kept according to the law and practice of the Jews. This caused great excitement, and the preacher was summoned to appear before the Vice-Chancellor, to whom he gave a modified retraction.

Another sermon may be mentioned, preached a couple of years later by a man named Gray, who, so far from wishing to imitate the Jews, lamented that the Church of England maintained Jewish music. Bishops, archbishops, patriarchs and popes, were introduced into the Church by Satan. Observance of fasting on Saints' Days or their Eyes was abominable. To play at cards or dice was to crucify Christ. There were too many dumb dogs in the Church. He condemned kneeling at the sacrament, and turning to the east.

A more important event happened in the same year, 1587, when a Synod of Disciplinarians met in Cambridge, that is, the society of men pledged to introduce into this country the discipline of Geneva. It seems that a number of secret conclaves were held here for the purpose, and it has even been said that Cartwright used to steal up to join them. But this time it was a more open gathering, at which members were directed to 'wipe off the Calumny of Schism, in that the Brethren communicated with the Church in the Word and Sacraments and in all things except its corruptions, and that they assumed no authority to themselves of compelling others to their Decrees'.

On the face of it this sounds a very reasonable and moderate statement. What it conceals can be easily imagined, but at any rate it shows that the participators still had no intention of separating

from the Established Church, though the separatist movement had by this time been definitely launched. It happened in this way.

There was a Fellow of Pembroke named Richard Greenham, a supporter of the Calvinist party, but, disgusted at the excesses of so many of Cartwright's followers, he felt unable any longer to stay in Cambridge, so retired to the rectory of Dry Drayton. There he took in pupils, among whom was one who was destined within a very few years to rise to great fame — or notoriety, according to the point of view — bearing the undistinguished name of Robert Browne. Browne did not take holy Orders, but did take to preaching, his first scene of action being gravel pits in Islington. In 1578 he returned to Cambridge, where he was granted a licence to preach by the bishop, and quickly became very popular, and a recognized leader among the younger Calvinists.

He followed in the footsteps of Cartwright, but was more logical, for he realized that nonconformity within the Church was an impossible compromise, and began boldly to proclaim the doctrine of separation. It is not surprising that his licence was revoked after only six months, when he left Cambridge for Norwich.

He found himself imprisoned in Norfolk, fled to Holland, and there issued a treatise under the title: 'Reformation without waiting for any'. This, in 1582, may be regarded as the birth of Congregationalism, though at the time his followers adopted his name, and were known as Brownists.

His later history is something of an anti-climax, for, while Brownists continued to flourish, and made no small stir in the country, he, the author of the movement, after passing through difficult times, accepted episcopal ordination some ten years later, and spent the last forty years of his life in a country parish in Northamptonshire.

In troublous times like these, strange fanatics are sure to appear, with fantastic ideas which do no good to the party they are supposed to support. We find a little light relief in one Ralph Durden, a man who stood up in Cambridge proclaiming himself to be Elias, and preaching in what was described as a very disorderly fashion. As so many others have done, he specialized on the Book of the Revelation, which he interpreted according to his own fancy. In particular he announced that he was called by God to deliver the Jews, to the number of 144,000. Whether these were literal Jews or the elect followers of Ralph Durden cannot be certainly decided.

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In either case they were without fail to follow him to Jerusalem. It was perhaps not a bad thing when he was imprisoned by the Vice-Chancellor.

Another little story comes from the Abingtons, where Thomas Goodman was vicar of the combined parish. Not only did he sadly neglect little Abington, but 'he useth himself more like a husbandman than a minister, for he useth to be with his plow and his cart when he should be at Service'. We may conclude that Mr. Goodman was not one who was inspired to follow the harder path of the Puritans, but kept drearily in the old groove.

All this time, while the Puritans were forging ahead, the opposite faction also were a thorn in the side of authority. The actual number of Romish Recusants in this part of the country does not seem to have been large, and most of them were probably to be found among country gentlemen who lived quietly, and only asked to be left alone to worship God in the manner they thought best. But heresy-hunting was rampant, especially in Cambridge, where it was more difficult to remain in obscurity.

Some who had held office in the University in Queen Mary's reign were scattered about the country, confined to certain areas. In some cases these were very liberal, amounting to two or three counties. Thus Thomas Redman, formerly chaplain to the Bishop of Ely and Master of Jesus, could apparently wander in the counties of York, Westmorland and Lancashire. On the other hand, Dr. Alban Langdale, described as 'learned and very earnest in papistry', was to remain with Lord Montacute, or at his disposal.

Dr. Caius came under strong suspicion, and the Vice-Chancellor reported to Cecil that he had instituted a search in the college, and found 'much popish trumpery, vestments, pix, mass books, with other such stuff as might have furnished divers masses at one instant'. The books he had burned and the other articles defaced.

Dr. Legge, successor to Caius as Master of the college, was likewise accused of fostering Popery. Many charges were brought against his pupils, whom he was said to encourage secretly. Even his butler was denounced as a great perverter of the youth in his house. Naturally the Master was also accused of maladministration of the college.

It might be expected that St. John's would make short shrift of any suspects, and a victim was found in Everard Digby, believed

to be father of the man of the same name who came into notoriety later on in connection with the Gunpowder Plot. Everard senior was duly expelled from his college.

But the most spectacular treatment of Romanists was not in its origin connected with the locality at all, as it involved conspicuous men drawn from all parts of England, but the venue happened to be the Bishop of Ely's castle at Wisbech.

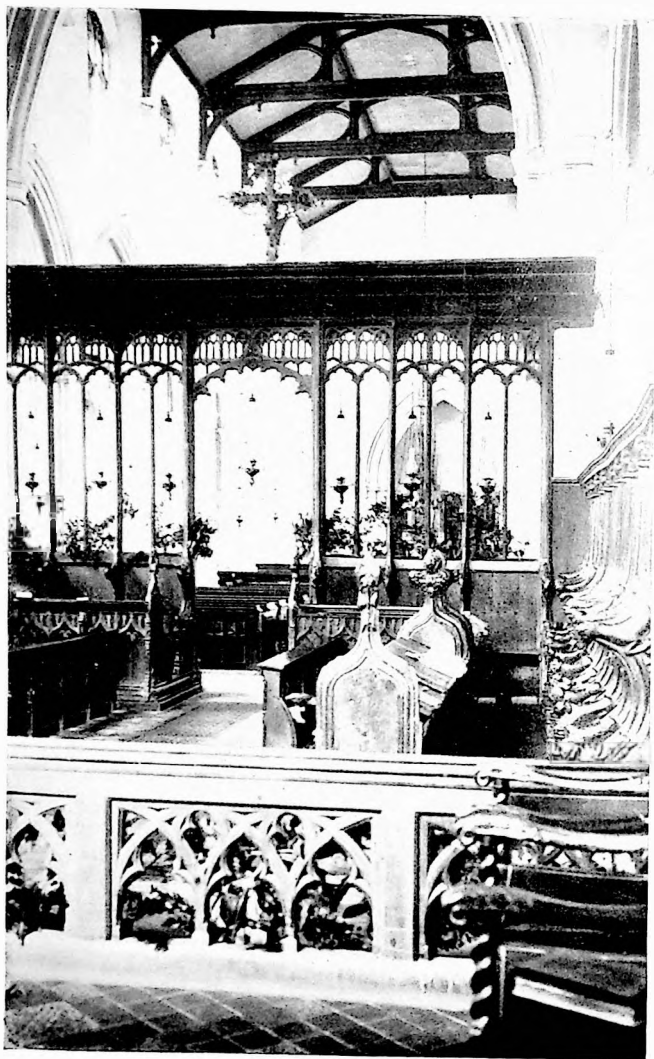
If continental influence was at work in aid of Puritanism, it was still more so in connection with the Romanists, as here high politics were at stake. The Recusants in England were in point of fact disposed to be thoroughly loyal to the Crown, but they suffered from the activities of returned exiles, and still more the complications of European relations.

Archbishop Parker was constrained to take strong measures, and in 1580 Wisbech Castle was turned into a prison. The first man to be sent there was Dr. Young, formerly Master of Pembroke, who was soon joined by eight or nine other gentlemen. For the first few years their condition was far from intolerable. It was simply a concentration camp, without the sinister associations of the word. They were able to say Mass in their chambers and to carry on intercourse with their friends outside, both by letter and by visit. The castle became a place of pilgrimage for all sympathizers.

Most of the original prisoners died before many years had passed, but in the meantime their numbers were considerably increased. Then complaints began to be circulated that through the favour of the keeper, Gray, the prison was growing to be as dangerous as a seminary college, being in the heart and the midst of England.

The real trouble began in 1587, when about thirty priests were sent, among them Father Weston, a Jesuit, said to be one of only three Jesuits in the country at the time. He set to work to establish himself as the head of the community, and the result was a disastrous division into two factions. The secular priests resented the intrusion of the Jesuit, and Weston on his side levelled accusations against the others of all kinds of immorality, whoredom, drunkenness and gambling.

The situation got worse and worse, and came to a climax in 1594, when a hobby-horse was introduced for the Christmas festivities, and the Jesuit party withdrew altogether from the rest.



BALSHAM CHURCH, SHOWING EARLY STALLS AND SCREEN

Peace was restored, for a time only, as it proved, the following year, but quarrels quickly broke out again with mutual recriminations. A dreadful state of affairs ensued, which was the talk of the whole country, till at last, about the turn of the century, Weston and several of his friends were removed to the Tower, while thirty-six others were taken to Framlingham.

The general situation in Cambridge is now clear. It shows a steady growth of the Puritan spirit against continued attempted repression from official authority. Appeals were made to Cecil, or Lord Burghley, as he became in 1581, as Chancellor of the University, who, while keeping up a strictly judicious attitude, was undoubtedly inclined to favour the Puritan cause.

The same is true of most of the queen's counsellors, among them Sir Walter Mildmay, Chancellor of the Exchequer. He comes into our story as the founder in 1584 of Emmanuel College. The queen, who disliked Puritans as much as she did Papists, accused him of erecting a Puritan foundation. His answer was: 'No, Madam, far be it from me to countenance anything contrary to your established laws. But I have set an acorn, which, when it becomes an oak, God alone knows what will be the fruit thereof.'

However that may be, the college did from the first emit an intensely Puritan atmosphere. The chapel was unconsecrated, and looked north, while the kitchen looked east. No surplices or hoods were worn. The behaviour at the sacrament was described as irreverent, the congregation sitting on forms about the communion table, and taking the loaf one from another, and similarly the cup.

The truth, no doubt, was that they regarded the service as imitating the informal Love Feast of the early Christians, rather than the solemn sacrament that followed.

This character of the college was maintained, and it is noticeable that under the Commonwealth no fewer than eleven heads of houses were drawn from Emmanuel.

A dozen years later yet another college was founded, Sidney Sussex, by Lady Frances Sidney. It was built on the site of the old Franciscan friary, which was sold for the purpose by Trinity. According to one writer its avowed object was 'to detest and abhor Popery'. But nothing appears either in Lady Frances' will or the original statutes, which were based on those of Emmanuel, to justify such a statement. It did, however, like Emmanuel, develop

a Puritan character. One of the earliest students was no less a person than Oliver Cromwell.

A pleasing little story comes from Christ's at this time. Two of the Fellows, Clark and Powell, lodged a complaint that they were passed over for promotion in the college because of their Puritan tendencies. Three weeks later a statement was drawn up and signed by twelve members of the college, including these two, to the effect: 'We whose names are subscribed do forgive and forget all injuries passed whatever, and do promise to deal Christianly and friendly hereafter, one with another, in words and actions.' Let us hope that this admirable rapprochement was justified by the sequel.

In 1595 we hear of St. John's again. The protest this time was from the Anglican side. It seems that one Alvey, a Fellow of the college, with his friends, had been filling the college with unlearned Puritans; he ignored the queen's Supremacy; had no licence to preach, and moreover had held a conventicle, in the absence of the Master, of Cartwright and his friends. This may have been one of the occasions on which Cartwright was believed to have paid a surreptitious visit to Cambridge. They had further defended the validity of Orders conferred overseas, which were not episcopal, and had organized a procession to protest against the expulsion of Johnson, a Brownist.

This Johnson had been suspended from the ministry in 1583, and since then had for nine or ten years continued to serve Benet parish. Another of the group, Harrison, was still in possession of the vicarage of Histon. Another, Newton, late curate of Barnwell, never wore a surplice, nor used the sign of the cross, nor did he allow the ring in marriage.

Other Fellows of the college committed similar offences, and all of them, when they read service in the college chapel, left out parts of the prayers in the communion service at their pleasure.

To crown their efforts they conspired to have Alvey as Master of the college, but in this they were unsuccessful.

In the last decade of the century there were signs of a certain reactionary current setting in. Heads of houses are heard to say that false doctrines are spreading rapidly, meaning this time Romanist, not Puritan, doctrine. No authors find a readier market than 'popish' ones, and the study of many a divine will be found stocked with works of the Schoolmen, Franciscans, Dominicans,

or even Jesuits, while of Protestant books there are few or none. Even in St. John's the Master laments that papistry is greatly on the increase.

To some extent this may have been the result of increasing interest in theology as such, as opposed to the now threadbare topic of Church discipline, and Calvinism was so well established that any criticism of its tenets was enough to rouse the gravest suspicion.

Two famous cases come before us. William Barrett, Fellow of Caius, in 1595 preached a sermon against Calvin, which was at once said to savour of Popish doctrine. The Vice-Chancellor summoned him to appear, and faced him with a recantation which he was to read. He did so, but in such a manner as to give offence, for he made it clear by his tone that he was acting under authority, and held the document in contempt.

A correspondence ensued between the Vice-Chancellor and Archbishop Whitgift, who was still in charge of the vacant diocese, the upshot of which was that the archbishop considered that the Vice-Chancellor had been somewhat high-handed. So he invited Barrett to come and see him unofficially to talk the matter over. His persuasiveness was more effective than direct action, and Barrett did express regret for some things that he had said, and revoke his errors. However, he soon afterwards left the realm and ended his life as a layman in the Roman Church.

More important was the case of Baro, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity. Baro was a Frenchman, who had received his Orders at the hands of Calvin himself. As long ago as 1581 in a dispute with the Master of Emmanuel he had offended the more rigid Calvinists by upholding the co-operation of faith and works in bringing salvation, and had stated that the heathen might be saved without the Gospel, and, worst of all, that Rome was not altogether intolerable.

However, the matter dropped for the time being, but fifteen years later a sermon of his gave great offence, as he denied one of the primary articles of the Calvinist faith, asserting that God created all men in his own image, and therefore intended all to be saved, and not the majority to be damned.

The archbishop was consulted and gave it as his opinion that it was unfit that this man, being a stranger, and receiving such courtesy and friendship here, and not for any need we had of him

(God be thanked), should stir up new commotion, when these things were beginning to be settled.

Baro had his explanation to offer to the archbishop, which was on the whole accepted, but in the end he felt constrained to resign his professorship.

In 1581 Bishop Cox died, after holding office for nearly a quarter of a century. In the diocese as a whole his reforming tendencies seem to have met with general acceptance, as Puritanism found ready favour in the country districts.

The next decade was marked by a noticeable number of changes of incumbents in the country parishes, as many as a hundred and five being recorded. Whether this was due to unsettlement springing from current controversy does not appear.

Trumpington held the record with as many as nine vicars in ten years. The living was, as it is now, in the gift of Trinity College, in which we know that there was a strong division of opinion. But it may be that a number of Fellows repaired there in turn for a period of rest, with no intention of making a permanent stay.

Two relatives of Dean Perne were appointed to livings at this time, Richard Perne to Downham, and Thomas Perne to Wentworth, which was in the gift of the Dean and Chapter.

Soon afterwards a vacancy was caused at Balsham by the death of the said dean, who seems to have held this rectory in addition to his other emoluments.

In 1600 at long last a new bishop was found for the diocese. On the death of Cox in 1581 the queen had, according to custom, appropriated the revenues during the vacancy, but she also made it known that she intended to keep a large share in perpetuity, with the result that a successor was difficult to find, and it may be that Elizabeth was not ill content. Finally she brought some compulsion to bear on Martin Heton, who held the see for nine years, but left little mark on the place. He had to accept it on condition of alienating to the Crown the richest of the few manors still left to the see. And this so rankled with Fuller that his verdict on Heton is that 'his memory groaneth under the suspicion of sacrilegious compliance'.

He inherited from the Archbishop an incomplete visitation of the diocese, which is notable only for the large number of presentments that followed. It is interesting to study an analysis of them. There were forty-one for immorality, ranging from cases of a gross

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nature to comparatively minor matrimonial troubles. The next greatest number is thirty-six for working on Sundays or Saints' Days. Almost as many, thirty-four, were for non-attendance at church. But none of these seem to have been directed against Puritans. There were a few Papists, but the majority were probably either just lazy, or engaged elsewhere, or, in a few cases, under sentence of excommunication for the time being, and therefore unable to attend.

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DESPITE all the edicts and injunctions issued under Queen Elizabeth, Puritanism increased its hold on the country, helped not a little by the sympathetic leanings of men in high places, notably Cecil himself. Most of all was this the case in Cambridge, where Cecil wielded especial influence as Chancellor of the University.

At the beginning, then, of the new reign the situation in outline was that, on the one hand, the appointed leaders, both in the diocese and the University, proclaimed and struggled to enforce strict conformity, while on the other, the rank and file were more and more puritanically inclined. And the position was further complicated by all too frequent lapses from ordinary morality on the part of those from whom an example might have been expected. We for our part may justifiably ascribe this failing to the general laxity of the period, but it was easy to lay it at the door of the Church, and so increase the clamour for reform.

The advent of King James naturally raised hopes on both sides. Recusants and Puritans alike looked to him to redress their grievances, and he on his side fondly believed that his upbringing and personal connections would enable him to establish a true unity.

But they and he were speedily disillusioned, and he began to put down a heavy foot on both extremes. He would have neither Pope nor Presbyterian, but an English Church under himself as head.

While he was still on his way to London he was met by the Millenary Petition, supposed to be signed by a thousand ministers. It was, on the whole, remarkably moderate, and refrained from tackling the main problem of the essential government of the Church. The petitioners prayed for reform in four main directions. First they had their standard objections to certain features of the Prayer Book. Secondly, they demanded an increase in the number of preachers, who should be bound by less stringent conditions of subscription. Then they condemned pluralities, and the abuse of endowments. And lastly, administration, especially in the direction of discipline, should be amended.

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Cambridge had already passed a resolution that any who publicly opposed the doctrine or discipline of the Church should be degraded from whatever office he held in the University, and it repeated this in answer to the petition. Its protest was, however, much less vigorous than that of Oxford, and it may be doubted whether such action as it did take was representative of the majority of the members.

Already from the beginning of the reign measures had continually been taken to insist on the conformity that the king demanded. In 1604 Lord Cranbourne wrote to the heads of houses calling on them to repress all liberties heretofore permitted, and to uphold the constitution of the Church and the Orders prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer, and also to keep a vigilant watch against private conventicles.

In 1609 Nicholas Rush, of Christ's College, uttered diverse things contrary to the religion established and against the clergy, and, refusing to retract, was expelled.

Half a dozen years later, John Walters, vicar of Shelford Magna, was presented for not reading prayers on Saturdays and some holy days, but extenuating circumstances were found, in that he was 'a very aged man and crasie, and then at Cambridge for the most part'.

At Coveney a lesser man, John Matthews, found himself in trouble for absenting himself divers times from the church, 'but we think it proceedeth from an infirmity in his wyttes'.

Early in the reign Bishop Heton began a diocesan visitation, which seems to have been interrupted by his death in 1609, and to have been carried on by his saintly successor, Lancelot Andrewes. The impression gained from the result is to the effect that the old strictness in observance of festivals and Saints' Days was disappearing, and with it the maintenance of Church customs in general. Attention was paid, accordingly, to somewhat petty faults of individuals, including, it may be noticed, illicit dealings that savoured of witchcraft.

Thus there were many presentments for sleeping in church, or for brawling and fighting during divine service. Ralph Shirte, gentleman, was presented at Baburgh for fetching home a cauldron of coals on St. Luke's Day. Robert Throgmorton 'contrary to the canons doth leave his parish of St. Edward's [Cambridge], and doth go to Bene't Church to hear Divine Service'.

At Over, Ezra Purkins, schoolmaster, not being in any Orders at all, was found to be in the habit of conducting service in church, preaching twice on Sundays, burying, churching women, and so forth.

At Cottenham, Richard Coverley 'taketh upon him to be a cunning man, being neither physician nor chirurgeon; and to him divers do resort as to a cunning man or wizard'.

It is noticeable that in these instances censure is brought upon negligence and moral laxity, but there is no mention of failure to conform. This may have been due, in part, to the gentler character of Bishop Andrewes, who relied more upon the methods of example and persuasion than of force.

Where direct action was taken, as in the case of Rush, the onus was laid on the college, not on the bishop. For, as often before, the University asserted its claim to be exempt from episcopal jurisdiction, with the result that the king himself issued special directions for its conduct, in more dictatorial terms than the bishop would have done. He ordained that all canon laws of the Church were to be observed, and all members of colleges were to repair to their chapel at Christmas, Easter and Whitsunday, and communicate. All were to receive communion kneeling, and were to wear their surplices and hoods. No lectures or sermons in any parish were to draw scholars away from catechizing and divine service on Sundays or Holy Days. Further, 'any fanciful conceit savouring of Judaism, Popish superstition, or Puritanism, disagreeing with the laudable and approved customs of our Church are to be speedily checked and reformed'.

Andrewes stands out, not only as one of the great bishops of Ely, but as a giant of his period. He has come down to posterity chiefly as Bishop of Winchester, where he spent the last nine years of his life; but he was associated for many years with Cambridge. As early as 1589 he became Master of Pembroke, and made a name as one of the foremost scholars of his time. He was offered, and refused, the bishopric of Ely in 1598, objecting to the queen's appropriation of a large portion of the revenues. For a few years he was Bishop of Chichester before being translated to Ely in 1609.

Before that he had taken part in the Hampton Court Conference, and his name appears first among the divines who made what we know as the Authorized Version of the Bible.

As a churchman he followed the king in being equally removed

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from Rome and Puritanism. His piety has been described as that of an ancient saint, semi-ascetic and unearthly in his self-denial. We can well imagine that he was true Father in God, leading his flock, and not bullying them. He was a great enough man to realize that true devotion may take various outward forms, and to sense the feeling of the people under him. They were increasingly imbued with the spirit of Puritanism, which was alien to his personal inclinations. Yet it is said that even at the end of his time at Ely¹ 'none dared to commit idolatry by bowing to or adoring the altar or the bread and wine'. Fifteen years later, after more vigorous methods had been tried, ritualism was still falling more and more into contempt.

When Andrewes left for Winchester he was followed at Ely by Nicholas Fenton, his intimate friend, who also had been Master of Pembroke. He was universally beloved, and had the reputation of being generous and hospitable. He was nominated Bishop of Lichfield, but his college begged to be allowed to retain him. He did, however, resign his mastership on his appointment to Ely.

His fame as a scholar is shown by his having been made one of the translators of the Epistles for King James's version of the Bible. As a churchman his attitude was less defined than that of Andrewes. He certainly stood out as a strong Anglican, but showed some leanings towards Puritanism. He had as chaplain Edmund Calamy, who was known as a Nonconformist, though not an uncompromising one, and showed his confidence in him by presenting him to the benefice of Swaffham Prior.

Calamy admitted that there were some few things in which he did conform, such as wearing the surplice, and bowing at the name of Jesus, but *not* in the matter of that 'wicked Book of Sports'. He was later driven from the district by Bishop Wren's Articles in 1636.

The next bishop was very different from his two predecessors. John Buckeridge had been tutor at Oxford to no less a person than William Laud, and it was through Laud's influence, now very strong in the country though he was not yet Archbishop, that he was brought from Oxford to Ely, adding one to the crowd of unpopular episcopal nominations that marked the year 1628.

Laud was now shaping his vigorous policy which he was able to put into full operation when he was promoted to Canterbury a

¹ Trevelyan, *History of Trinity College*.

couple of years later, an event which was destined to have a profound effect not only on Church life in the country, but on the whole national history.

He at once proceeded to send his Vicar-General through every diocese, noting every dilapidation and every irregularity. The pulpit was no longer to be the chief feature in the church, but the communion table. The Puritan lecturers were suppressed. He showed great hostility to the Puritan sabbath, and supported the reissue of the Book of Sports, which was especially odious to that party. He ordered the justices of the peace to enter houses to search for persons holding conventicles, and bring them before the commissioners. The University, as usual, claimed exemption from all such inquisitions, but Laud sought and obtained full powers of visitation.

It was in the spirit of his former pupil that Buckeridge came to Ely. It may have been at his instigation that the Speaker of the House of Commons in the same year asked for the names of all persons in the University since the thirteenth year of Queen Elizabeth who have taught, written or published any points of doctrine contrary to the articles of religion established in that year. But what was done does not appear, for Parliament was dissolved a fortnight later.

About the same time one Barnard, of Emmanuel, was presented for Puritanism. He had said that those who set up crucifixes and bow to the altar are greater traitors than those who are traitors to the king. He was called upon to retract, but he affirmed that attempts for the dishonour or shedding of blood royal are not attempts against the whole Church, nation, or State. The king is subordinate to the nation and people, being but the means and not the end.

It was said of Buckeridge that he 'brandished the two-edged sword of Holy Scripture, against Papists on the one side and Puritans on the other'. Perhaps it was as well for the diocese that he only survived for three years.

To fill the vacancy Francis White was translated from Norwich. His tenure of office at Ely was marked not so much by his own work or personality as by the fact that it witnessed the advancement of Laud to Canterbury, where, as we have seen, he lost no time in calling the whole country to order. Nevertheless, little seems to have happened in Cambridgeshire for the first few years. The

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outward sign of adherence to his mandates was the railing off of the altar at the east end of the church, and it was left to Girton to take the lead in this in 1636, when Laud had been at Canterbury for three years.

On the other hand, Puritanism still increased among the bulk of the people, stimulated by a growing reaction against the prevalent laxity in morals. In the same year, 1636, Cosin and Sterne wrote from Cambridge to the Archbishop complaining: 'we have such private fancies and several prayers of every man's making (and sometimes suddenly conceiving too) vented upon us, that besides the absurdity of the language directed to God Himself, our young scholars are thereby taught to prefer the private spirit before the public, and their own invented and unapproved prayers before the Liturgy of the Church'.

But Bishop White's ineffective rule did not last long, for he died in 1638, and was succeeded by a far more famous man in the person of Matthew Wren, uncle of the great Christopher. He had once been Master of Peterhouse, and then Bishop of Norwich. There in the short two and a half years before his translation to Ely he roused the Puritanism of East Anglia to a dangerous pitch of rebellious fury. That fact presumably marked him out in Laud's eyes as the most suitable man to put in charge of the most puritanical of all dioceses.

Like his predecessors, Wren began his task by holding a visitation, for the purpose of which he issued a list of most searching questions, probing into every detail of Church life. They fall under four heads.

First they dealt with the broad outline of religion and Church government. Was there any preaching of heresy, and denying the king's supremacy? Was the Prayer Book used as it should be? Were there any disaffected or recusants in the parish?

Secondly, he inquired more in detail about the conduct of public prayer. Did any disturb the reading of it? Was baptism duly administered, accompanied by the wearing of the surplice? How often was holy communion administered, and was it received kneeling?

There followed questions about the condition of the church fabric, the supply of the requisite books, the Prayer Book, the Homilies, Bishop Jewell's works. Were the font and communion table in good order, and free from irreverent use? And were there

steps up to the altar, and rails round it? Did the church possess a good surplice, and adequate vessels for holy communion? Were the church registers kept, including one for visiting preachers? And was the churchyard enclosed and preserved from profane use?

Lastly as to the minister himself. Was he a graduate, and did he hold any other cure? Was he strict in the performance of his duties, in the church and outside among his parishioners? Was he diligent in visiting the sick, reclaiming recusants, forbidding private baptisms, marriages, and other meetings in conventicles?

The churchwardens and sidesmen also had their duties, and reports on them were demanded.

The returns from a large number of parishes are preserved in detail, and if they may be taken at their face value, the bishop could have found little to displease him. The clergy on the whole were doing their work satisfactorily, and obeying the Laudian injunctions. There were, it is true, complaints here and there on moral grounds. Swaffham Prior and Fen Ditton suffered from incumbents against whom charges of excessive drinking were brought. And Thomas Whatton, of Grantchester, had been brought before the Consistory Court for drinking when he should have been conducting divine service. It was stated that he was zealous in supporting Bishop Wren's innovations, but that he was a great drinker, often seen at the Swan in Cambridge at 11.0 at night, and that thence he went to the Three Blackbirds, and thence to the White Lion, where he played a game called Putt for drinks.

Offences such as these needed to be watched at all times. But Wren was more particularly concerned with the need of enforcing ecclesiastical discipline. He fully realized that a parting of the ways had been reached. Rails round the altar may seem to us now to have formed but a poor pretext for speeding on the conflict. But the fact was that either the pulpit or the altar must be the central feature in the church, and they stood for widely divergent conceptions of the ultimate objective of religion. It is true that 'generally speaking the altar was the resting-place of a definite creed; the pulpit was the wrestling-ground in days when men, seeing darkly, yet claimed God's revelation'.

If the answers to the questions were honest, there must have been by this time a wide acquiescence in the decrees of Laud. For the exceptions admitted were few in number.

Chettisham owned to having no rails, and Sutton neither steps

nor rails. At Witcham the table was not placed where an altar should be, and there were neither steps nor rails.

At Manea there was a minor point for discipline, for it was found that children were baptized in a basin in the village, instead of being taken to the mother church, which was at Doddington. On the other hand, some churches, St. Edward's, Cambridge, for example, could claim full marks for their answers. Elsewhere there were failings that denoted slackness rather than disobedience.

Thus, at All Saints', Cambridge, baptism was apt to be unduly deferred; the middle Ally (aisle) was much sunk by gravel; the churchyard much abused by common thoroughfares, which have continued time out of mind; and dogs were often seen in the church.

St. Andrew's had no rails, no vestry and no porch. The parson was not resident, took no prayers on Eves of Holy Days, and did not catechize.

Holy Trinity was generally uncared for. The chancel and vestry were out of repair, and the windows half stopped up. Doors of private houses opened into the churchyard, and one of them kept a dunghill against the church wall.

Swavesey owned to having one step only up to the communion table, but above that there was a decent rail, a yard high. This, however, did not run right across the chancel, but had its ends turned towards the east wall, because the chancel door opened against the communion table, and there was no other possible entry. There was a chantry chapel which had been converted into a cottage in the town.

Chatteris similarly had but one step, and no rails. The minister does not go up to the table at marriages, nor does he administer communion then. And 'he weareth not a square cap'.

At Elm it raineth in upon the communion table.

Things were worse at Wisbech St. Peter, for there unlawful conventicles were held at the house of one Thomas Borth at the Castle. Moreover communion in the church is received sitting.

These are but a few reports out of a large number that survive, and suffice to indicate the general purport. They were varied in some instances by the appearance of presentments for minor offences, which suggest that the wardens, or other authors of the returns, were anxious to display their zeal. So at Doddington, William Aspland was presented for sitting with his hat on in time

of divine service, a contumacious fellow, no doubt. While at Balsham, Robert Cockerton, for refusing to receive the communion these many years, was 'prest for a soldier'.

One more may be mentioned. A woman found herself in trouble at Fen Drayton, and was duly suspended, her offence being that she absented herself from her parish church, and, on being admonished, said that the churchwardens were 'scurvy conditioned people'.

A case of more direct clerical discipline arose at Histon, where it was alleged that 'Mr Jo. Slegg holdeth two Vicarages upon a pretended union (one of ye churches being demolished in Queen Elizabeth's time), but Mr Slegg never served the cure himself since he killed the man at Chesterton, neither has he procured any settled curate, but takes all the proffitts, and gets young scholars to read and preach, sometimes one and sometimes another, but whether layman or no will not be known, because the Churchwardens dare not displease Mr Slegg. And not long since a man's wife lay dead 2 or 3 days and no bodie could be gotten to bury her'.

Our curiosity is excited much more by the dark allusion to the sad fate of the man at Chesterton than by Mr. Slegg's artfulness in clinging to a defunct plurality. Did the vicar's carriage run over him on a dark night, or had the Chesterton man made himself obnoxious to Mr. Slegg, knowing too much about his double vicarage, and so received a well-merited blow, which, alas, proved fatal? History is silent.

The parish of Histon is still described as St. Andrew with St. Etheldreda, but it is to be hoped that the present incumbent is no longer liable to be presented for his method of holding the two. The actual story is that there were from very early times two manors, each with its own church, built in the same churchyard. St. Andrew's was commonly known as Colville's, because Henry de Colville held the estate from the Bishop of Lincoln. Towards the end of the fourteenth century the advowson passed to the abbess and convent of Denny. In the reign of Edward I, Philip de Colville founded a chantry 'in pure alms for his own soul and the souls of his father and mother', and endowed it with lands in Histon and other villages. The convent retained possession till the Dissolution, when the manor was granted to William Boyet.

Meantime the Abbot of Eynsham, near Oxford, held fifteen

hides of land together with the rectory of St. Etheldreda, and this continued till the Dissolution. The manor was then sold to Sir John Hinde of Madingley. Then in 1600 Sir Francis Hinde 'did pull down the church of St. Etheldreda in Histon, to which there appertained a vicarage presentative, and forced the parishioners to thrust themselves up another small church in the same town, to the great wrong of the parishioners thereof'.

It appears that the population of St. Etheldreda's had by this time become negligible, but this scarcely justified Sir Francis in his high-handed action of taking the materials of the church to build his own house at Madingley.

Mention may be made of a curious sect at Wisbech, called the 'Culimites', after David Culy, who lived at Guyhirne early in the seventeenth century, described as an 'ignorant enthusiast'. His tenets were apparently much like those of ordinary Calvinists.

In discussing both the normal Church life and the controversies of this age, we are liable to find ourselves judging and criticizing by the standards of reason to which we are ourselves accustomed. A corrective to this is offered by an occasional glimpse into the every-day occurrences of the century with which we are at any time dealing.

The mania for persecuting witches, says Dr. Trevelyan, was less bad in England than in some countries, but it touched its highest point in the first half of the seventeenth century. Two instances may be given, one from the sixteenth, and one from the seventeenth century, which will suffice to show the potent admixture of superstition in the religious belief of all classes.

In the middle of Queen Elizabeth's reign, one Elizabeth Morthlocke in one of the villages was noted for being a witch, who could heal children with unlawful means. She answered that she, through the help of God and divers prayers, viz. five paternosters, in the worship of the five wounds of Our Lord, five Ave Marias in the worship of the five joys of Our Lord, and one Creed in the worship of the blessed Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, one God and Three Persons in Trinity, and the Holy Apostles, in the vulgar tongue, 'which done, she measureth the girdle or band of any such person who is sick haunted from the elbow to the thumb, and by cravings for God and saint Charity sake' — through all this she would know if the sick person were or were not haunted by a spirit, and no doubt be able to take action accordingly.

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The other case is that of Dorothy Ellis in Stretham in 1647. 'About 30 years since, she being very much troubled in her mind, there appeared unto her the Devil in the likeness of a great cat, and demanded of her her blood, which she gave him.' He then demanded her to bewitch four of the cattle of Thomas Hitch, which all quickly died. Then he sent her to take away the life of the daughter of Thomas Salter of Stretham, and to lame the mother, which tasks she accomplished.

The fate of these women is not recorded, but we may fear the worst.

In an age when such occurrences were accepted as a normal part of daily life, the standard of judgment was so far removed from that which our modern generations have inherited, that it becomes difficult to estimate their mentality at its true value, and many of the causes that underlay their disputes remain foreign to us. We can, therefore, only record the facts, and recognize gladly that under a strange surface there persisted a real striving after truth and a genuine search for God.

CHAPTER XII

THE CIVIL WAR,

THE outbreak of the Civil War found Puritanism strongly entrenched in the University, and definitely predominant in the county. This, with the neighbouring counties of East Anglia, formed one of the earliest bulwarks of the parliamentary party, under the command of the Earl of Manchester, with no less a person than Oliver Cromwell as his lieutenant.

It is curious to recall that only six years earlier Cromwell had not only succeeded to his uncle's estates at Stuntney, but had followed him in his office as farmer of the Ely Cathedral tithes. It appears to have been during these last years that his religious convictions took shape, but with that story we are not concerned.

At the same time the Royalists formed a strong minority, especially in the University, where a collection was promptly made of a substantial amount of money and plate, which succeeded in running the gauntlet along the Huntingdon road and reaching the king.

But their time was short. The Earl of Manchester, in addition to his military command, was entrusted with a commission for regulating the affairs of the University, and for the removal of 'scandalous ministers' in the seven associated counties.

At the outset the Earl of Holland, who was Chancellor at the time, fearing the worst for the colleges, obtained from the House of Lords an order safeguarding all college chapels, libraries and other buildings. This was immediately discounted by a warrant authorizing the parliamentary agents to enter the houses of all Papists and malignants that should refuse to appear at musters or contribute to the Parliament. All students were given twelve days in which to sign the covenant, on pain of being thrown out.

The result was that scarcely a scholar escaped examination, and chapels and libraries were converted into stables for horses, or magazines for arms and ammunition.

The University was very much a house divided against itself. The old régime had seen to it that the great majority of the heads of houses and the leading professors were episcopalians and Royalists, but they were hard put to it to control their underlings.

Two colleges, Emmanuel and Sidney Sussex, stood out definitely on the side of the Puritans, yet their Masters were among the twelve who were deposed.

It is true that the reason alleged for this drastic action in the early cases was the unwillingness of the men to agree to new directions for the relief of the poor in Cambridge by the University funds, but soon this gave way to plain charges of disaffection. From St. John's alone the Master, Dr. Beale, and no fewer than twenty-nine Fellows were ejected, while Queens' was reformed root and branch, so that there was not a man of the foundation left, while new ones were substituted, who, though 'short in learning and ability, went beyond them in good affections to the Parliament'.

Among five who were ejected from Peterhouse were two who call for special mention. One was the poet Richard Crashaw, vicar of Little St. Mary's, who had always associated himself with the extreme High Church party. He made his way to France, and joined the Roman Church.

The other was Joseph Beaumont, who nevertheless became vicar of Elm-cum-Emneth in 1646, and canon of Ely. He also acted as domestic chaplain to Wren in his imprisonment. Then after the Restoration he returned to Cambridge as Master first of Jesus and then of Peterhouse.

This carrying out of the original threats was delayed till 1643, when the Earl of Manchester entered on his latest commission.

As for Dr. Beale, the wonder is that he was not dealt with earlier, as two years before he had boldly declared that the Papists were the king's truest subjects, and that the Puritans were traitors; that it was a sin not to bow at the name of Jesus or to the communion table. And it was well known also that it was largely through his instrumentality that the collection for the king was initiated and carried through.

About the same time Holdsworth, the Vice-Chancellor, had made a vigorous oration in which he condemned the 'insults, contumely, foul abuse couched in terms of lowest scurrility and buffoonery which were hurled at the liturgy, the clergy, the whole episcopal order, nay, at the Church itself'.

Some of the dignitaries who were deposed were taken to London as prisoners, while for the rest Cambridge itself was virtually turned into a prison, no scholar being allowed to leave the

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town unless some townsman 'of his own tribe' would vouch for him.

Nevertheless, there were some who escaped for the time being. Sancroft, Fellow of Emmanuel, was left to continue his studies in peace till 1650, when he shared the fate of the rest. 'Some would persuade me', he wrote, 'and I am somewhat prone to believe it, that I have some secret friend who doth me good offices.' It is probable that, living as he did in a college noted for its Puritan sympathies, he was honoured and respected by his companions, and had contrived to exalt his ideal of saintliness rather than the spirit of controversy. He lived to become Archbishop of Canterbury.

The University apart, the first object of attack was the bishop himself. The charges in the petition that had earlier been presented against him were renewed, and he was summoned to London in 1641. He was not at first imprisoned, but the delay was only a short one, and he was finally committed to the Tower, where he remained till 1659, his goods meantime being plundered and his estate confiscated.

The news that he was arrested was greeted with a loud and mixed clamour. On the one hand, a tract was speedily circulated under the title: 'Joyful news from the Isle of Ely declaring the manner of the apprehending of Bishop Wren.' At the same time yet another petition was drawn up and presented to both Houses of Parliament, praying for his release. It was in the name of 'Gentlemen and Students of the University of Cambridge', who did not, be it noticed, claim to represent the University in any official capacity, but appended their signatures as private individuals. Needless to say, the petition had no effect.

There is a story¹ to the effect that Cromwell met at the house of his daughter, Mrs. Claypole, who was, it may be mentioned in passing, an ardent churchwoman, the young Christopher Wren, who was a friend of the Claypoles. The Protector came out with an abrupt statement to the young man that his uncle might come out of the Tower if he liked.

Christopher at once ran off to the Tower to give the good news, but to his distressed amazement was met by a blank refusal. 'This is not the first time', said the bishop, 'that I have received like information from that miscreant. I disdained the terms for my

¹ Quoted by Whitaker-Wilson, *Sir Christopher Wren*.

hearts of Rulers to call together some of the most Godly learned Moderate and peaceable of all four opinions [i.e. Presbyterians, Independents, Episcopal, and Erastian] not too many to agree upon a way of union and accommodation, and not to cease till they have brought it to this issue — to come as near together as they possibly can in their Principles?’

He realized that this was a somewhat Utopian conception, but he did visualize a real Church with more elasticity than was allowed under the official Anglican leaders, and of such a Church he remained ideally a steadfast member.

Baxter stood thus between the two extremes, though inclining, as we should say, to the left. There were infinite gradations, and others must also have longed for a compromise, while they themselves swung to the right.

But he was an outstanding man, both in piety and ability, and the common herd may well have stood rather vaguely with him, while incurring the charge of being time-servers, which some of them certainly were. We shall notice a few instances of clergy who did sign the Covenant and retain their benefices.

Meantime the assembly entrusted by Parliament with the work of reformation proceeded to draw up what was to be the only legal form of worship, known as the Directory, and to establish presbyteries throughout the country. It should be noted that the Directory was not just another liturgy, but did what its name implies, gave directions for the conduct of worship, allowing considerable latitude. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that in many parishes the minister, after signing the Covenant, continued quietly to use the Prayer Book as before, but it is difficult to discover to what extent this was done.

The names of the forty recalcitrant clergy are preserved for us in a ponderous tome written half a century after the Restoration, entitled ‘The Sufferings of the Clergy’. It is unfortunate that this and other contemporary works which supply us with much evidence are strongly biased, so that we get no first-hand picture of the genuine devotion of the numbers of convinced Puritans, who, no more than those of the opposite party, wished to be involved in perpetual struggles. But we may at any rate accept as authentic the bare facts that we are given, and the lists of names, which must have been easily verifiable.

In the course of this volume the author gives the full list of

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ejected clergy in the whole country, in alphabetical order. Fortunately for us, he also gives under each initial the counties alphabetically, so that it is easy to pick out those from our own county.

As a rule he does not specify the charges brought, but it is clear that for the most part they consisted of the straightforward accusation of supporting the king and opposing the parliament. Sometimes, however, there is mention of some moral delinquency as well.

The most vigorous one is that brought against Thomas Goade, of East Hatley, about whom the author remarks: 'he ought rather to have been hanged than sequestered, if what is charged upon him be true, as that he had formerly been deprived of his living for immoralities, notwithstanding which he continued to be most frequently and forcibly drunk, even to bestiality.'

So William Pavey, of Marham, is accused of assisting his Majesty, discouraging the Rebellion, and drunkenness.

Thomas Wake, of Burrough Green, was deprived for 'swearing, drinking, quarrelling, and riding over a woman for which she died'. Also he said that collects were better than preaching, and he prayed for the bishops, although he had taken the Covenant.

Richard Watts, of Chesterton, was objected to on various grounds, including the fact that he was a pluralist, as he held also the living of Mildenhall, and that he sued for his tithes. The author says that this was 'the first instance I remember to have met with where the last of these clauses was made an express article against any clergyman, though it was probably the cause of many'.

Mr. Hill, of Coveney-cum-Manea, also sued for his tithes, though this time it does not seem to have been this alone that brought about his downfall. We learn that he sued for a tithe-calf, and with the money bought a communion table, on which he put the inscription: 'Go thy way; sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee' — a touch of humour that did not appeal to the Puritans.

Occasionally there appears something more directly doctrinal, notably in the case of the most important of all the victims. This was John Manby, D.D., rector of Cottenham, a very wealthy living. Previously he had been chaplain to Bishop White. According to the 'Calumnies of Parishioners' he claimed that he had power to forgive sins; he used to bow to the altar; he asserted that Holy Days were to be kept as much as the Lord's Day; and that

prelates, and not the king, had power to make laws and to govern in matters ecclesiastical.

His rich parsonage was given to Oliver Cromwell's sister, Robina, who then married one Peter French, while the benefice was given to John Nye, a noted Puritan. He was imprisoned for a year and a half in St. John's College, which had been turned into a gaol. His sickly wife and five small children were turned out of doors by the soldiers, and his brother-in-law, Mr. Case, who also lived in Cottenham, was attacked for sheltering the family. His goods were freely robbed, and he continued to suffer various forms of persecution. After the Restoration he regained his living.

Against Mr. Exeter, of Soham, it was alleged that not more than three or four of his parish took the Covenant, though it consisted of three hundred families.

Mr. Baker, of Bartlow, called those who took arms against the king traitors; he hoped to see King Pym hanged.

Lastly, Robert Grimes, of Wicken, may be mentioned as a typical case. His crimes were observing the Orders of the Church, and disaffection to the Parliament cause; particularly he never exhorted the people to take the Covenant; giving notice of Saints' Days but not of Parliament's fasts; and being a great swearer.

To what extent moral defects in the case of Mr. Grimes and others were invented or exaggerated by the malice of parishioners must remain a matter of conjecture. Even allowing for the somewhat free-and-easy standard of the times, it is to be feared that the clergy were not by any means always so strict with themselves as any age has a right to demand. Certainly we cannot write off the report on Mr. Goade as wholly fictitious.

Others not already mentioned who were ejected were the incumbents of Linton, Leverington, Arkesden (Hauxton), Oakington, Fenny Ditton, Botesham, Toft, Stretham, Wisbech St. Peter's and St. Mary's, Castle Camps, Little St. Mary's, Castleton-cum-Willingham, Burwell, Milton, Swaffham Bulbeck, Wisbech (Mr. Lee here drank Prince Rupert's health, called a Godly Minister 'Brother Red Face' and a Parliament Major 'Rogue'), Cheveley, Wimpole (a Fellow of Caius, who put in a curate who neglected the parish and played at cards), Hardwick, Downham, Eversden Parva, Dunnington and Connington, Fowlmere, Wilbraham Parva, Swaffham Prior, Kingston, Orwell, Grantchester and Welbourn.

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Signature of the Covenant was not, of course, confined to ministers. Everyone alike was expected to sign, and the numbers who did so varied very much in different places. The village of Over must have topped the list, in proportion to its population, with as many as one hundred and fifty-eight.

At least two names can be added to the above list of ejected ministers, perhaps more. For William Hart, of Sutton, was a victim. It is told of him that he then bought a house in the village, and a few cows, and began to keep a dairy and a school. He attended church, sitting in the lowest part. He was a strict sabbatarian and very hospitable. Later he definitely joined the dissenters, and was restored to his church. At the Restoration he refused to conform and was again ejected. He was evidently a humble, truly pious man, of a type that must have been not infrequent, but that does not come much into the limelight. We should like to know of more of them.

And Mr. Crossland, vicar of Bottisham, was sequestered in 1644 for saying that the Party had taken up arms against the king. He is described as 'a time-server, and one who observes bowing towards the East, standing up at the Gloria Patri, and suchlike superstitious worship and Popish innovations in the church'.

That a certain amount of free speech was still possible is shown by a delightful controversy that took place in the parish church of 'Swacy' on October 3rd, 1652, when four questions were propounded.

They were — whether there be any need of Universities? who is to be accounted a heretic? whether it be lawful to use Conventicles? and whether a layman may preach?

The line of argument of the zealot who began the fray is left to our imagination. More is told us of the answer delivered by Robert Boreman, D.D., Fellow of Trinity.

'Little birds', he said, 'scarce fledged or hatched, flying with their shells on their heads, and having only a feather or two of boldness in their faces shall dare preach, or rather prate against learning, which they never had, and inveigh against Universities of which they never deserved to be members. He that shall perversely deny an Article of the Church, he that shall likewise wilfully err in the principles of good living, he that shall overthrow the doctrine of the Sacraments, either denying the exercise and use of the Sacrament of Baptism, or not celebrating the Eucharist

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according to our Saviour's institution, by denying the Cup to the people . . . ' he shall deserve all the penalties of the divine law.

Then, with regard to Conventicles — 'he [the devil] now endeavours by stopping the mouth of God's lawful ministers, and sending out his Shemaiahs, Nehelamites, his dreary chaplains, who dream of a government never thought of by Christ . . . The classical presbyters made way for these abuses and corruptions in our Church by making an unhappy breach in it when they brought in their motley Directory into the Church, by which means they drove many out of it into Conventicles'.

In addition to the elimination of 'scandalous ministers' there came, as was to be expected, a search for all outward and visible signs of superstition, just as had happened in the early days of the Reformation. Together with Manchester there appeared 'one who calls himself John Dowsing, who by virtue of a pretended commission goes about the country like a Bedlam, breaking glass windows'.

This encouraging introduction of the man is given by the author of a work called 'Querela Cantabrigiensis', written roughly about the same time as 'The Sufferings of the Clergy'.

The passage continues at length — ' . . . having battered and beaten down all our painted glass, not only in our Chapels, but (contrary to orders) in our public Schools, Colleges, Halls, Libraries, and Chambers, mistaking perhaps the liberal arts for Saints, and having (against an order) defaced and dugged up the floors of our Chapels, many of which had lain for two or three hundred years together . . . compelled us by armed soldiers to pay forty shillings a College for not mending what he had spoiled and defaced, or forthwith to go to prison'.

Parliament had issued an order that all altars of stone were to be demolished, communion tables moved from the east end, rails taken away, and that any ground that had been raised within twenty years for any altar or communion table be levelled; all tapers, candlesticks, basins removed; crucifixes, crosses, images, pictures of one or more persons of the Trinity or the Virgin Mary destroyed; as well as other images or pictures of saints, or any superstitious inscription.

It was to carry out this order in this and neighbouring counties that Dowsing was sent. This time we have not only the possibly coloured account from the other side, but his own diary, relating

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his deeds in detail. He certainly seems to have been a man of little discrimination or even knowledge, but a fanatical iconoclast. In addition he was not above accepting a little judicious persuasion in certain cases to abstain from extreme action.

The chief objects of his attack were crucifixes, images, glass windows, inscriptions asking for prayers for the souls of the departed, and also rails and steps to the altar. These last were particularly obnoxious, as savouring strongly of the Laudian régime.

A few instances taken at random will suffice to show his procedure. He made a thorough tour of the churches and colleges in Cambridge, and refers in his diary to some eighty-five villages. That leaves about seventy unaccounted for. It is probable that some at any rate of these were visited, as his diary is far from an orderly one. His dates are very confused, and many notes bear all the appearance of having been jotted down at some later time from memory.

Trumpington is the only place mentioned where he met with a distinct refusal. There he ordered three superstitious pictures to be destroyed, and the steps to be levelled, 'which Mr. Thompson refused'.

At Swaffham Bulbeck, '4 crucifixes, and Christ nailed to them, and God the Father over one of them, and we brake down a hundred superstitious pictures, and 2 crosses we took off the steeple, and 2 on the Church and Chancell. We digged down the steps and 20 cherubims. John Grange, that dwelt at the Manor House this summer, after he and other Malignants had been drinking and laughing at the round heads, had his house burned down at 10 o'clock in the morning, witness Robert Cuttell and many others'.

At Thriplow, 'we brake about 100 cherubims and superstitious pictures'. Nevertheless, a century later the church was still full of old stained glass showing saints and angels, with Michael by the side of the Virgin Mary holding scales, in one of which a child outweighed a devil. It was left to modern restorers to remove all this.

At Linton, 'we took up 8 inscriptions, and brake down 3 crucifixes and 80 superstitious pictures, and brake the rails, and gave orders to deface 2 gravestones with Pray for our Souls'.

At Toft, '27 superstitious pictures in glass, and 10 others in stone, 3 brass inscriptions, Pray for the Souls, and a cross to be

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taken off the steeple, and divers Orate pro Animabus in the windows, and a bell Orate pro anima Sanctae Catherinae'.

At Hatley, 'we brake down 10 superstitious pictures, and a picture of Christ, and the steps to be levelled by John Skelton, Minister, and there was written over a coat [of arms]: Will St. George gave a hide of land in Haslingfield with his daughter to be a Nun in Clerkenwell, in the time of Henry II, which we burned'.

At Wimpole — among other things '2 pictures of the Holy Ghost in brass'.

At Hinxton, 'we gave orders to take down a cross off the steeple, and the Lady Hinde to level the steps'.

At Wood Ditton, '30 superstitious pictures, a crucifix, and the Virgin Mary, written the Mother of God, have mercy upon us'.

At Teversham, 'we brake 2 crucifixes in the chancel, and there was Jesus written in great capital letters on six Arches in the Church and in 12 places in the chancel, and steps there. The pavement I digged up, the 6 Jesus in the church I did out and 6 in the chancel, the other 6 I could not reach, but gave orders to do them out. There was on one side of the altar Phil. 2, 10, and on another side Psalm 95, Come let us worship and fall down, and 4 suns painted, and within the first written God the Father, and in the second God the Son, and in the third God the Holy Ghost, and in the fourth Three Persons and One God'.

In Cambridge itself, both in churches and colleges, the tale was the same. In Sidney and Emmanuel, Dowsing found nothing to be done, nor in Benet College. But in Queens', 'we beat down about 110 superstitious pictures, besides Cherubim and Engravings, where none of the Fellows would put on their hats in all the time they were in the Chapel. And we digged up the steps for 3 hours, and brake down 10 or 12 Apostles and Saints within the Hall'.

The upheavals in the town left the churches ill served, for towards 1650 it is recorded that of the fourteen parishes none had a minister or preacher except St. Mary the Less, where one was still provided by Peterhouse, and St. Andrew the Less. Some had no vicarage and no maintenance, but had been served from colleges, Trinity in this way being responsible for St. Peter's and St. Michael's.

These facts were revealed by an inquisition specially held to investigate the position. Its report recommended the union of

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several pairs of churches, namely St. Peter's and St. Giles', St. Sepulchre and St. Clement's, St. Michael's and All Saints', St. Mary the Less and St. Botolph, and St. Benedict and St. Edward's, but effective action does not appear to have been taken.

It was during the Commonwealth that George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, appeared on the scene. He began his itinerant preaching about 1647, and quickly acquired his great reputation. In 1653 he had occasion to enter Cambridge, and had a rough reception. His own account says: 'The scholars, hearing of me, were up and were exceeding rude. I kept on my horse's back, and rode through in the Lord's power. When we were in the Inn they were so rude in the courts and the streets that the miners, the colliers, and the carters could never be ruder.'

This boorish behaviour was probably accounted for by the fact that in the same year, presumably earlier, two women of his following, known by the opprobrious nickname of 'Quakers', had arrived from the north, and discoursed with some men from Sidney Sussex College whom they met in the street. They told them that they were Antichrists, and that their college was a Cage of Unclean Birds, and the Synagogue of Satan — language well calculated to rouse the ire of undergraduates at any time. The unfortunate zealots were hauled off and whipped at the Market Cross.

The story is told by one Joseph Besse in his book, written not very much later, entitled 'Sufferings of the Quakers'. He proceeds to give a catalogue of many others who suffered similarly.

The chief offences were refusing to swear on a jury, going to meetings, testifying against the corruption of the times, absenting themselves from public worship, inveighing against tithes, refusing to join the County Militia, and so forth. Even to entertain a Quaker privately was regarded as a punishable offence. A widow at Over is specially mentioned as being imprisoned for non-attendance at worship.

Half a dozen years after the attack on the Sidney men, the 'Cage of Unclean Birds' was still remembered, and a group of Quakers was set upon as they were going to a meeting, and violence ensued, while the Proctors refused to interfere. 'They would run through the meeting-house like wild horses, throwing down all before them, halloing, stamping, and making a noise as if several drums had been beating, to prevent his being heard.'

Despite this organized opposition local groups were formed, and

meeting-houses established. The earliest of these appear to have been in Littleport, in 1655, and in Cambridge not later than 1658 or 1659. Several others are found in the first years after the Restoration, at Over, Sutton, Wisbech and Doddington.

Of the unalloyed piety and devotion of these splendid people there can be no question. They had no political allegiance, but were equally obnoxious to both parties. They had no conceivable secondary motive, only extreme loyalty to their one Lord and Master.

On the accession of Charles the Cambridge Quakers addressed a letter to him setting forth their complaints, and in particular that they were accused of being rebels, and that at the moment there were 31 men in the county gaol, 9 in the town gaol, and 16 women. One typical case was that of George Thorougood, who was thrown into prison for opening his shop 'on the Day called Christmas Day'.

Needless to say, this petition had no more effect than a larger one from the Society as a whole. On the contrary, the following year a special Act was passed against Quakers, inflicting penalties for refusing to take the Oath of Allegiance, and forbidding their assembling in public or private with more than five people.

But this is passing beyond the scope of this present chapter. Suffice it to say in conclusion that before the end of the Commonwealth the Quakers had a flourishing community in Cambridge, with a meeting-house opposite the gate of Sidney, and that they busied themselves preaching at street corners against the Universities, the profession of learning, tithes and the clergy. Such topics would gain a ready hearing from many at that time, though a few years later their popularity would be very much at a discount.

A community of an unusual kind sprang up at Thorney in Commonwealth days, delightfully unconnected with sectarian strife or political unrest.¹

In the latter part of the previous century the infamous Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day and other outbreaks of persecution had resulted in large numbers of French Protestants, the Huguenots, flying to Holland for safety. There many of them found employment in connection with the national drainage schemes, and became adepts in embanking and drainage. Consequently when

¹ What follows is taken from the Introduction to the *Register of French Protestant Baptisms at Thorney*, by H. Peat.

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Vermuyden, the Dutch engineer who undertook similar work for our fens, issued an appeal for men to accompany him to England, these Frenchmen responded in considerable numbers.

There were two main areas where operations were carried on, the Level of Hatfield Chase further north, and our own Bedford Level. The success of the work in the former, about the year 1626, was said to be largely due to these immigrants. But opposition arose from the conservative dislike of any such changes, and acts of violence ensued against the drainage, which led further to attacks on the men concerned, culminating in absolute lawlessness about the time of the outbreak of Civil War.

The result was that many of the Huguenots withdrew to the Bedford area and settled in Thorney. We saw in Chapter X how that village had relapsed into desolation in consequence of the reforming destructiveness. Now it began to revive, and by 1638 the remains of the abbey church was restored to serve as the parish church. The drift from the Hatfield Level continued, and by 1652 a French church was definitely established. They were helped by an ordinance issued by Cromwell a couple of years later 'for the better preservation of the works of the Great Level of the Fens', in which he granted formal permission to foreigners, on condition that they were of the Protestant faith, to become purchasers or farmers of any lands in the district.

The men fell roughly into three classes — skilled workers in drainage, agriculturists, who were the most numerous, and men with capital. All these joined in one congregation for weekly prayer. They were allowed the use of the abbey church, and had a form of prayer in French, which became their liturgy. This is still extant, as is also the register of births, marriages and deaths, which was carefully kept, and continued for nearly a century.

Gradually these Frenchmen became absorbed in the surrounding population, and it is said that even to-day their names are to be found in every village and hamlet throughout the fen country, though often anglicized and corrupted beyond recognition.

CHAPTER XIII

THE RESTORATION

REVOLUTIONARY changes in a country are brought about primarily by political, social and economic causes. Religion plays a minor, if not unimportant, part. And that was so in the case of the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, in which the religious factor was certainly present.

The Englishman wants liberty above all things, not least in the sphere of religion. And anti-clericalism, says Dr. Trevelyan,¹ has again and again been the decisive make-weight in the balance between religious parties in this country.

He explains that by anti-clericalism in this connection he means not the extreme form of revolt against the Church and religion as such, in the sense in which we are familiar with it on the continent, but a rooted dislike of the pretensions of the pious, whether Anglican priests or Puritan 'saints'. 'After the triumph of the Parliamentary armies came the "rule of the saints" with their canting piety used as a shibboleth to obtain the favour of the dominant party; their interference with the lives of ordinary people; their closing of the theatres and suppressing of customary sports.'

This explains the comparative quiet of the change-over in a rural district like ours. In the University the divisions were more clearly marked, but in the country parishes, while Puritanism and Non-conformity (in the broad sense) were firmly established — as they have continued to the present day — what men demanded more than anything else was freedom to worship God and spend their lives as they wished. Men had turned against the tyranny of Laud. Now they turned against the tyranny, expressed in a different form, of the Puritan. If, then, they could now best find their liberty under bishops and clergymen — so be it. How far they did find it in the sequel is another story, but at any rate things began well.

Through the whole of this period, from the outbreak of the Civil War to the end of James II's reign, there was a relative absence of religious bitterness in and round Cambridge. On the one hand, the High Church party was never so fanatical as it was

¹ *Social History of England*, p. 232.

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at Oxford, and on the other, Puritan fanaticism was rather imposed from without than born within.

Of the thousand or more ministers who gave up their livings in the country and went out to endure persecution for conscience sake, there were but few in this county, fewer than the forty who had been displaced twenty years before.

But when Bishop Wren got to work once more with his old vigour, there was some trouble, though still, judging by the replies to his second visitation, the number of dissidents in the country parishes was remarkably small. Perhaps we must again allow for a natural anxiety on the part of those who made the returns to stand well with the bishop.

There is a counterpart to the catalogues in the 'Sufferings of the Clergy' in a somewhat similar book written from the Puritan standpoint at the end of the century by Edmund Calamy, grandson of the man of the same name whom we have met at Swaffham Prior.

This younger one was baptized by his father (who also bore the same name, and was a clergyman with distinct Puritan leanings), but insisted when he came to man's estate that he had never belonged to the Anglican Church. He is famous for being, with a friend, the first man to be ordained publicly by Dissenting ministers to the Nonconformist Church. But that came later, as he was born in 1671, and our interest in him here is as a historian.

He enumerates a score or less who lost their benefices in the diocese as a result of the Act of Uniformity in 1662.

The first he names is Nathaniel Bradshaw, a Puritan rector of Willingham. He retired to St. Ives, but after the Act of Toleration, he resumed activities at Willingham. He was, says Calamy, 'well adapted to the people of Willingham, who he found very Profane and Ignorant'. He continued to reside at St. Ives, and asked from his former parishioners only pay for his diet from Saturday evening to Monday morning, and horse hire from St. Ives, a distance which he gives as five miles. From his successor's point of view he was a troublesome barn preacher.

Then there was Jonathan Jephcot, who had succeeded Edmund Calamy the elder at Swaffham Prior as long ago as 1633. When the notorious 'Book of Sports' was published, he duly read it to his folk as ordered, and then proceeded to preach 'for the Sanctifying of the Day'. He was the means of converting many, and was

the instrument of good to certain gentlemen's families. He was troubled by some people who pretended to Visions and Revelations, particularly one woman who foretold that the Day of Judgment would appear on a certain date that she named. When the day came, it dawned bright and fair, but a terrible tempest of thunder and lightning ensued, causing much trepidation. But the storm passed off, as did the fears of the people.

In 1661, 'finding many in the place altered for the worse, turning with the tide, and swimming with the stream', he determined to remove at the first opportunity, and went to live in Lincolnshire.

Another account, however, says that his retirement was not altogether voluntary, as Bishop Wren was much incensed against him because, in conjunction with other ministers, he had ordained several men in Cromwell's time. This does not conflict with what is said above about Edmund Calamy's ordination, as Jephcot, if the charge was true, was acting as a member of the Established Church.

In any case, he did withdraw, and was left in straitened circumstances, whereupon some nine or ten of his friends combined to support him. He rewarded them by dedicating to them a Latin acrostic, the lines beginning with the letters of the text: 'Beati miseri cordes quia obtinebunt misericordiam' (Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy).

Ely lost the Rev. William Sedgwick, popularly known as 'Doomsday Sedgwick' because of his adherence to the prophetess of Swaffham. Those who knew him well described him as 'a pious man with a disordered mind'. Perhaps Ely's loss was not a great one.

William Burchell, after being ejected from Wentworth, did what good he could by private preaching and expounding the scriptures, and holding converse with his friends in their houses. After the Toleration Act he set up a meeting at Sutton, and preached twice every Lord's Day. He was reduced to great poverty and 'lived in mean circumstances, and yet was always contented and cheerful'.

Robert Wilson, of Owre (Over), was an occasional preacher. Calamy questions whether he was ever actually ordained, though he seems to have been in possession of the living. He was a good musician, and after losing his position at Over supported himself by instructing scholars in Cambridge and young gentlemen all the country round in the art. This he found very profitable for a time.

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Calamy describes him as 'a zealous Dissenter, though no preacher. He was eminently pious and charitable, and an Arch Beggar for Nonconformity'.

Richard Kennet, of East Hatley, left the county and set up a school elsewhere. He was very moderate in his principles and practices, but could not bring himself to take the required oath.

One more instance¹ may be told at somewhat greater length, as it has points of special interest, recalling, as it does the bitter attacks on the Quakers. That, in fact, is the chief burden of the tale, but the dénouement is unexpected.

Just before the Restoration one James Bedford, priest of Bluntisham-cum-Earith, brought himself into the limelight by his somewhat uncouth tactics. His principal opponent was George Whitehead, an energetic Quaker preacher. Whitehead tells us that Bedford 'made a great noise, boasting, and clamour' against the Quakers in an attempt to 'render them ridiculous and odious'. To this end he held a dispute at Haddenham, at which, says Whitehead 'I observed the priest to be a mere empty confident boaster and reviler'.

The upshot was that Whitehead challenged him to a public debate in his own church at Bluntisham. Bedford then named a day when he believed Whitehead could not be present. Whitehead, however, at once took horse and hastened to Bluntisham. The priest mounted the pulpit and, not seeing Whitehead sitting quietly in a pew, called over and over again: 'Where is George Whitehead?' 'Whereupon I stood up and said, "Here I am".' Bedford then asserted that he was not the man at all.

After a time the debate began in earnest, until at last 'Priest Bedford, instead of making any reply or defence for himself, quickly came down, quitted the place, and left the assembly'.

Then, says Whitehead, 'I had a very good and quiet opportunity to declare and demonstrate the truth, and preach the gospel to the people', and he announced another meeting that he proposed to hold in the village.

Soon afterwards came the Restoration, when, in addition to the Nonconformist ministers who were in possession of benefices, some of the regularly ordained clergy who were inclined to Puritanism voluntarily gave up their benefices and emoluments rather

¹ The story is told by Mr. C. F. Tabbutt, *History of Bluntisham-cum-Earith*, pp. 170 *et seq.*

than accept the official demands. Among these was James Bedford.

Of the remaining victims Calamy gives little or nothing more than their names, though he has more to say about others from the University. Here, as so often before, there was a change at the head of most colleges, some of the former Masters being restored, who had themselves been evicted because of the Engagement or the Covenant.

By the king's direction surplices were to be optional, except in cathedral churches and colleges, but, of course, the Prayer Book was to be used. In Emmanuel College the liturgy was, by way of compromise, read one week, and the Directory used the next. No surplices were worn.

Some of Calamy's remarks about prominent men may be quoted. Dell, Master of Caius, he describes as 'a very unsettled man', an adjective that he seems rather fond of. As for Thomas Moore, Master of Magdalene, 'the main thing that he stuck at was the declaration in the Athanasian Creed, saying that he could not in Conscience down all those to Hell who were there [i.e. in the Creed] damn'd'.

John Wood, Fellow of Magdalene, and a noted classical scholar, was 'one of the most helpless, shiftless men in the world'.

Alexander Green, Fellow of Pembroke, was 'an Holy but Melancholy Person'.

We are left with the impression that Calamy, though definitely a party man, was less fanatical and more sober in judgment than his confrère of 'The Sufferings of the Clergy'.

So much for individual cases, picked out mostly because of some personal eccentricity. But more weighty matters were afoot. This is the time when the foundation was laid of the vigorous Non-conformist, and especially Baptist, connection, which has flourished ever since. The Baptists stand out, if only for the fact that they were between two fires, from the Anglicans and Independents alike. They had nothing but their own strong convictions to rest upon, and these stood them in good stead.

The centre from which their work radiated was in the first instance Fen Stanton. This carries us back a little in the story. One Henry Denne was ordained in 1630, and served a curacy in Hertfordshire. But some ten years later he left the Anglican Church to become an Armenian Baptist. As such he was sent

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into Cambridgeshire to preach, which he did to some purpose, in defiance of the ban on Baptists. In 1644, when the Parliament was in power, he was arrested in Cambridge by the committee for removing 'scandalous ministers'.

He was released, thanks to the intervention of Disbrowe, Cromwell's brother-in-law, and lord of the manor of Eltisley, where Denne was installed as minister. His influence spread far and wide.

He subsequently joined the Parliamentary army, where he had a chequered career, but had in the meantime been influential in founding a Baptist church at Fen Stanton of which his eldest son was an Elder for a quarter of a century. Here a very large membership was enrolled, which is recorded in an extant register covering the years 1645 to 1692. They appear to have been drawn from as many as thirty-eight parishes, mostly in the county of Huntingdon, but including also Over, Sutton, Haddenham and others in Cambridgeshire, with the result that many daughter churches sprang up.

Two other men stand out as fathers of Nonconformist churches — Francis Holcroft (or Holdcroft), and Joseph Oddy. They were Fellows of Clare and Trinity respectively, and held the livings of Bassingbourne and Meldreth. Both were ejected from their Fellowships and benefices in 1662, and were imprisoned together. They proceeded to preach all over the countryside, caring nothing for drums that were beaten in Cambridge by the gownsmen to drown their voices. Calamy tells us that there is scarcely a village in the county where some old person could not point out the barn in which Holcroft preached. No prohibitions could stop him, but he persisted in administering the sacrament almost every Lord's Day, while being much against holding any communion with the parish church.

In the end he was sentenced to abjure the realm, with the alternative of death. He was, however, reprieved, and kept a prisoner in Cambridge Castle till 1672, where, it is noted, he received great kindness from John Tillotson, later Archbishop of Canterbury and then resident in Cambridge.

Oddy was also arrested and released two or three times, and then settled in Willingham, where he took up the work of Bradshaw. Thence he travelled and preached all over the fens, and it is said that people would come twenty miles to hear him, so that he often

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had to preach in the open fields. On the Indulgence in 1672 he retired to Cottenham, and continued his itineration till his death in 1687.

Both Holcroft and Oddy are buried at Oakington.

Meantime Bishop Wren was proceeding with his visitation, for which he issued a series of questions almost identical with those in his previous one before the Rebellion. The answers, generally speaking, showed ready acquiescence in the new order, but, as already suggested, there may have been a certain atmosphere of intimidation.

The bishop certainly was not prepared to put up with any insubordination, and his vehemence became too strong even for the king, who is said to have begged him to give no further disturbance 'in purging his diocese from disaffected ministers'. His answer was laconic: 'Sir, I know the way to the Tower.'

Calamy indeed declares that he could hear of but two incumbents in this county who afterwards conformed, namely John Nye, of an unidentified village called Settingham, and Cole of Burwell. It is difficult to square this optimistic report with the other facts.

Thus at Dry Drayton, Histon and Madingley, among other places, the minister from Commonwealth times still held office. Edward Augier was rector of Dry Drayton from 1653 till 1665, having duly accepted the Covenant in 1645, and renounced it before his congregation in 1662. He was reported as having kept his forty year old surplice, but having lost his hood. The communion table was still in the middle of the church, and other furniture purloined.

At Histon our friend Mr. Slegg, whose period of inaction referred to in a previous chapter continued for some fifteen years, seems to have been succeeded by John Ashley, who signs the registers in 1653, but was not formally instituted till 1662. The surplice had been conveyed away at the beginning of the war, and not yet replaced. The communion vessels were good. Men and women sat apart in church, and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered at least four times a year, always including Easter.

At Madingley there was no hood or surplice, and the book of canons had been taken away by the soldiers. 'We have a font of stone, a decent communion table, and a comely pulpit.' The

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table stood in the usual place, where it used to, but the rails had been removed.

The longest incumbency at this time was that of John Skelton at Hatley St. George and Hungry Hatley, from 1620 to 1665. Here, according to the wardens, everything was ideally perfect, save the rector himself. As for the communion table: 'There are none in our parish that do use it irreverently, by leaning or sitting on it, throwing hats, or writing on it.' The communion vessels also were in good repair. There was no heresy in the village, nor any denying of the king's supremacy, nor any Conventicles. The sacraments were duly administered. The church and chancel were in good condition, but not the parsonage barn, by default of John Skelton.

'Our minister is studious, and wears correct clothing. He doth not at any time wear in public any wrought night cap or coif, nor go abroad in his doublet without a coat or cassock, nor wear any light coloured stockings. Neither is he nor his wife excessive in apparel.'

Nevertheless, we have somewhat against him: 'We present Mr John Skelton, our minister, for serving the cure at Cockin Hatley in Beds, being something more distant from our parish than a mile . . . for not usually wearing of a square cap . . . for a frequenter of an Alehouse.'

Skelton retorted in kind: 'I present the Churchwarden and his Assistant for not preventing the private baptism of two children by Popish priests upon advertisement from me.' 'I present Simon Walter, Churchwarden, for saying that I favour myself in making his bill upon condition I would spare his landlord and his wife and children.'

There was evidently no love lost between the rector and his warden.

At Cottenham we are glad to find Dr. John Manby, who had been treated so ill, now reinstated and continuing rector in peace till his death in 1671.

Chesterton reports two men and their wives, also two brothers, absenting themselves from church. On the other hand, Theodore Crossland, the minister, has made a renunciation of the Covenant.

Horseheath is humbly penitent: 'For Holy Days the whole town stands guilty, but there are hopes of amendment; and for the parishioners receiving the sacrament we shall give a better account

at Easter; in the meantime we desire your patience. We have several persons who will not contribute towards the repair of our church, nor towards the provision of such things as belong thereto, namely Quakers, most of them excommunicate.'

At St. Peter's, Cambridge, 'our minister declared his unfeigned assent to the Book of Common Prayer and renounced the Solemn League and Covenant within the time limited by the late Act of Uniformity'.

Many more such instances might be given, but these are enough to indicate the usual purport. Two or three years later a survey made by Archdeacon Thomas Wren, son of the bishop, showed that the requirements were mostly complied with. Altars were placed at the east end of churches, steps to them replaced, and so forth. Cottenham and Willingham are mentioned as having new altars. A few parishes still had no surplice or hood. But the deficiencies still remaining were adjudged to be rather from want of money than of good intentions.

Ten years later Hungry Hatley is still behind the times. The font is foul, and the chancel wants paving, the reason alleged being that this state of things was the result of theological controversies that had exhausted the spiritual health of the country, while bishops had worked contrary to the wishes of the parishes.

But at this later date Cherry Hinton may be taken as more representative of the majority in reporting that they had among forty inhabitants no recusants and one dissenter. Why the population was so small we do not know. It is possible that they meant to say forty households. In any case, another ten years later, in 1685, they claimed two hundred and fifty communicants.

A well-known man in the county in these early years of the Restoration, with a more famous son, was John Tenison. He became curate of Cottenham in 1624, and according to one story he remained there all through the Commonwealth and afterwards till 1673, serving under six rectors, three of whom certainly were non-resident. 'Through the troublous times of the Commonwealth and the distressing months when the plague desolated the country the good man pursued his simple life.'

The other story is that he went to a rectory in Norfolk, and was ejected because of his loyalty to King Charles, his successor being, oddly enough, a disguised Romanist.

His son, Thomas, was born in 1636. He at first studied medicine,

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but gave that up for theology, and was privately ordained by the Bishop of Salisbury in 1659. He became a University teacher and Fellow of Corpus, and was then presented with the living of St. Andrew the Great, which he served from his rooms in college.

He had not been there many months before the plague broke out in Cambridge with such violence that none ventured to stay in his college except himself, two scholars and a few servants. To safeguard them, we are told, a preservative powder was administered in wine, while charcoal, pitch and brimstone were constantly burning in the gatehouse.

As long as the plague lasted he attended on his parishioners zealously, and, as it proved, with perfect safety to himself, in return for which he was presented by them with a handsome piece of plate when he left a couple of years later for the parish of Holywell-cum-Needlingworth, near St. Ives.

Twenty years after this, when he was well established in London, a large sum of money was placed in his hands for works of charity, part of which he applied to the benefit of twenty poor vicars in the dioceses of Canterbury and Ely, augmenting their stipends by £5, a much larger sum than it seems to us to-day. For the last twenty years of his life he was Archbishop of Canterbury.

Thomas Tenison, it may be added, was far from being unique in being ordained under the Commonwealth, for episcopal ordinations were frequent, and men so ordained were admitted to benefices. This was ignored by the authorities, probably because they regarded bishops and their work as negligible, and accepted a man solely on his merits.

The day of revolutionary changes and schismatic outbreaks in the Church was now drawing to its close. For two centuries, since the time of Wyclif, there had been a succession of upheavals and divisions, with a background of political strife. There was still no unity, and persecution of Nonconformists continued through the reign of Charles II, even after it ceased, by virtue of Acts of Toleration, to be official. The Nonconformist contribution to the religious life of the country had won its way, and more, perhaps in this part than in any other, it had established the claim of non-Episcopalians to their recognition as an integral part of the Church.

Dr. Trevelyan¹ says, speaking of the country as a whole, that

¹ *Social History of England*, pp. 253 et seq.

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dissenting congregations and meetings were almost confined to cities, market towns and industrial districts, though many villages had isolated families of Quakers and Baptists. This qualification is more noticeable in Cambridgeshire, owing largely to the work of Holcroft and Oddy. Presbyterian churches also were becoming numerous.

But, to quote the Master of Trinity again, it is certainly true that Anglicanism became distinctively the upper class of religion, far more completely than it had been in the days of Elizabeth or of Laud. We are moving on to the days of Sir Roger de Coverley, when 'the services of the parish church were under the special patronage of the ladies and gentlemen in the family pew; the great body of the congregation were their dependents, the farmers and labourers of the village'.

At the same time the chapels were gaining strength, and were centres of truly spiritual life, and from that day to this, the Fenland with its surroundings has been a stronghold of Nonconformity.

Much had happened in the thousand years since Etheldreda. Those early pioneers would have felt themselves strange in church or chapel of the seventeenth century, and conversely the devout worshipper in Restoration times would have been bewildered if plunged back to the first abbey church at Ely. Yet in every age the faithful could repeat the old saying: 'God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us.'

APPENDIX I
CHRONOLOGICAL SURVEY

<i>Kings of England</i>	<i>Bishops of Ely</i>
Henry I, 1100	Hervey, 1109-1131 (vacant 1131-1133)
Stephen, 1135	Nigel, 1133-1169. Royal Treasurer under Henry I, Stephen, and (probably) Henry II (vacant 1169-1174) Geoffrey Ridel, 1174-1189. Baron of the Exchequer
Richard I, 1189	William Longchamp, 1189-1197. Chancellor of England. Protector of the Realm during king's absence. Papal Legate
John, 1199	Eustace, 1197-1215. Built the Galilee Porch (Robert of York, acted as bishop 1215-1220, but not consecrated)
Henry III, 1216	John de Fontibus, 1220-1225 Geoffrey de Burgh, 1225-1228 Hugh Northwold, 1229-1254. Built the Presbytery. Dedicated the completed Cathedral William de Kilkenny, 1254-1256. Ambassador to Spain Hugh de Balsham, 1257-1286. Began the Collegiate system in Cambridge
Edward I, 1272	John de Kirkeby, 1286-1290. Royal Treasurer William de Luda, 1290-1298. Chancellor of England for short time Ralph de Walpole, 1299-1302 Robert de Orford, 1302-1310
Edward II, 1307	John de Ketene, 1310-1316 John Hotham, 1316-1337. Chancellor of England. Octagon Tower built by Alan de Walsingham. King's Commissioner on various occasions
Edward III, 1327	Simon de Montacute, 1337-1345, translated from Worcester. St. Mary's Chapel and new Choir built in Cathedral Thomas de L'Isle, 1345-1361. Buried at Avignon Simon Langham, 1362-1366. Chancellor of England. Became Archbishop of Canterbury John Barnet, 1366-1373. Formerly bishop of Worcester, and of Bath and Wells. Treasurer of England

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Richard II, 1377	Thomas de Arundel, 1374-1388. Chancellor of England. Became Archbishop of York, then of Canterbury
Henry IV, 1399	John Fordham, 1388-1425
Henry V, 1413	Philip Morgan, 1426-1435
Henry VI, 1422	(vacant 1435-1438)
	Lewis de Luxemburgh, 1438-1443, translated from Archbishopric of Rouen. Created Cardinal
	Thomas Bouchier, 1444-1454, translated from Worcester. Became Archbishop of Canterbury
Edward IV, 1461	William Gray, 1454-1478. Lord Treasurer of England. King's Commissioner to Scotland
Edward V, 1483	John Morton, 1478-1486. Lord Chancellor of England. Famous for 'Morton's Leam'. Became Archbishop of Canterbury
Richard III, 1483	John Alcock, 1485-1500. Lord Chancellor. Built Chapel in Cathedral
Henry VII, 1485	Richard Redman, 1501-1505. Formerly bishop of St. Asaph and of Exeter
Henry VIII, 1509	James Stanley, 1506-1515. Buried at Manchester
	Nicholas West, 1515-1533. Son of a baker in Putney. Ambassador to foreign Powers
	Attended the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Advocate of Queen Catherine
Edward VI, 1547	Thomas Goodrich, 1534-1554. Zealous Reformer
Mary, 1553	Thomas Thirlby, 1554-1559. Deprived by Elizabeth. Died 1570
Elizabeth, 1558	Richard Cox, 1559-1581
	(vacant 1581-1600)
James I, 1603	Martin Heton, 1600-1609
	Lancelot Andrewes, 1609-1619. Translated to Winchester
	Nicholas Fenton, 1619-1626, translated from Bristol
Charles I, 1625	John Buckeridge, 1628-1631, translated from Rochester
	Francis White, 1631-1638
(Civil War and Commonwealth 1642-1660)	Matthew Wren, 1638-1667, formerly bishop of Hereford and of Norwich
Charles II, 1660	Imprisoned in the Tower during the Commonwealth

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